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Strengthen and improve Canada's existing healthcare system, recommends Romanow

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – Roy Romanow's report on the future of healthcare in Canada reflects his staunch support for our national healthcare system, and makes recommendations which would strengthen it, but not radically alter it. But his recommendations come with a hefty price-tag: $15 billion more in healthcare spending over the next three years.

In his report's conclusion, Romanow writes: "I am acutely aware that the support of Canadians for their public healthcare system is conditional. It is given in exchange for a commitment that their governments will ensure that high quality care is there for them when they need it. If Canadians come to believe that their governments will not honor their part of the bargain, they will look elsewhere for answers. And the grave risk we will face is pressure for access to private, parallel services – one set of services for the well-off, another for those who are not. Canadians do not want this type of system." Romanow voices his opposition to privatization of healthcare system, but many Canadians have been outspoken in calling for more privatization (see related stories).

A new covenant

Romanow makes 47 recommendations on how to improve our healthcare system. His first one sounds almost religious in its appreciation of our system: "A new Canadian Health Covenant should be established as a common declaration of Canadians' and their governments' commitment to a universally acceptable, publicly funded healthcare system."

The Canada Health Act "has served us well and has achieved iconic status" – writes Romanow, using religious terms once more. He suggests the act be modernized and strengthened by expanding insured health services to immediately include home care services, followed by prescription drugs later on.

"Home care must become an essential service under the Canadian Health Act umbrella," asserts the report. A proposed new Home Care Transfer would cover services such as palliative home care for people who want to spend their last six months at home, rather than in a hospital.

One major concern Canadians have about healthcare is long waits for treatment. This is addressed by the report, which states: "Wait lists in Canada are often poorly managed and there are few standard approaches in place to assign people to a wait list or co-ordinate lists among different providers or facilities. Steps must be taken to put centralized approaches in place within health regions, on a province-wide basis or even, in some cases, on a national basis. Patients also have a right to good information about how long they can reasonably expect to wait for treatment, and what other options are available to them."

Helping rural and aboriginal communities

A new Rural and Remote Access Fund should be set up to attract and retain healthcare providers in remote parts of the country, and aboriginal healthcare should also be improved. Aboriginal health services ought to be "pooled into single, consolidated budgets in each province and territory to be used to integrate aboriginal healthcare services, improve access, and provide adequate, stable and predicable funding...." Aboriginal people would have direct input to this system.

A new National Drug Agency should be set up "to control costs, evaluate new and existing drugs, and ensure quality, safety and cost-effectiveness of all prescription drugs," suggests the report. Such an agency would also "provide comprehensive, objective and accurate information to healthcare providers and to the public."

To improve Canadians' understanding of our health system, Romanow proposes "Canada Health Infoway [a government health web site] should support health literacy by developing and maintaining an electronic health information base to link Canadians to health information that is properly researched, trustworthy and credible...."

To provide adequate funding and long-term stability to the healthcare system, Romanow recommends a new dedicated, cash-only Canada Health Transfer to provinces be set up by the federal government, including yearly increases set in advance for five-year periods.

Also, Canada's governments and health organizations should reduce their reliance on recruiting healthcare professionals from developing countries. Instead, the federal government should play a more active leadership role in international efforts to assist developing nations in strengthening their healthcare systems through foreign aid and development programs.

"Visit a small rural community and chances are good you will meet a doctor from a developing country who has come to Canada

See **ROMANOW** *page 2...*

TOM HANSON/CP

Roy Romanow delivers his prescription on how to treat Canada's healthcare system.

9,500 low caste Indians seeking baptism stopped by police

Dan Wooding

CHENNAI, India (ANS) — On Dec. 6th in Chennai city (Madras), in the state of Tamil Nadu, nearly 10,000 people were on their way to be baptized, when police stopped the buses. Many people were beaten and arrested. Only 500 were able to reach the location and were baptized.

Some 3,000 chairs had been set up under a tent for the service. The police came and destroyed all of this. Eleven of the Christian leaders that arranged the meetings were arrested and put in jail. When the international news media arrived the police backed off and that is what made some of the baptisms possible.

There were four speakers at the ceremony. Udit Raj, commissioner of income tax and president of the social justice party of India, who used to be Hindu but recently became Buddhist. He is a Dalit, formerly known as the "untouchable" caste of India. During his speech he urged Christians to start schools

See **DALITS** *page 8...*

MORNING STAR CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WEB SITE

Many Dalits joined this Christian gathering in India last November.

News

Romanow: Focus more on prevention

... continued from page 1

to practice," states the report. "While Canada has a long-standing policy of welcoming immigrants from around the world, we have an obligation to help protect healthcare systems in developing countries. We must learn to solve our problems domestically rather than rely on luring physicians away from developing countries where their services are desperately needed."

The report recommends that Canada should "integrate prevention and promotion initiatives as a central focus of primary healthcare, targeted initially at reducing tobacco use and obesity, and increasing physical activity in Canada. For too long, Canada's healthcare system has been overly focused on treatment rather than prevention."

Suggesting time-lines

Romanow has even gone so far as to suggest time-lines for implementing different parts of his report. The next step is for the federal and provincial governments to see how many of the report's recommendations they are prepared to implement and pay for.

So far, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has voiced guarded support for the report, but is only prepared to provide some of the money necessary. Speaking about the report in Saint John, N.B. on Nov. 29, Chrétien said, "You just don't throw money after a problem, not knowing what will be the results.... We could find some money. Probably not as much as Mr. Romanow is recommending." But, reports the *National Post*, Chrétien has promised to bring in legislation in 2003 to implement some of Romanow's recommendations, including strict accountability on provincial and territorial spending of federal healthcare grants.

Premiers criticize Romanow Report

Alan Doerksen

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. – Although the federal and some provincial governments have expressed qualified support for the Romanow Report, other premiers criticize the report, especially for its strings-attached approach to federal health funding. Other outspoken critics of the report say Romanow should have been more open to privatization of some healthcare services, as a way of making the system more efficient and cost-effective.

Reluctant to pay full cost

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has praised the report, saying that it "sets out a comprehensive blueprint for public medicare for the 21st century," in a speech in Saint John, N.B. Canadians are insisting that their leaders come up with a plan to modernize our healthcare system, said Chrétien, asserting, "The political price for any leader who blocks a successful meeting on health will be very, very high indeed. And I can assure Canadians that after a successful meeting, we will be there with the federal share of the money to finance the long-term plan." But Chrétien has also expressed reluctance to pay the full cost of the proposed programs.

Meanwhile, five provincial governments have expressed criticisms of the report. "We don't need someone to tell us how we should spend our healthcare dollars," declared Alberta Premier Ralph Klein recently. "We think it's an intrusion into our constitutional authority over the delivery of healthcare."

The Quebec government expressed similar concerns, saying it would forego extra funds from Ottawa rather than have the federal government dictate how it should deliver healthcare, reports the *National Post*. Quebec Premier Bernard Landry said serious consequences will follow if Chrétien implements the Romanow report's recommendations. Quebec is demanding unconditional federal funding for health care and rejects any attempt by Ottawa to dictate how the money should be used. If Ottawa refuses, Landry warned, his government is preparing a major offensive. Landry refused to say what actions his government would take. But with an election campaign only months away, the Romanow report has given the PQ a major plank in its campaign.

Ontario Premier Ernie Eves rejected the report, saying, "This report does nothing to shorten any waiting list today or tomorrow, or put one more nurse at a bedside today or tomorrow," reports the *Globe and Mail*.

The governments of Quebec, British Columbia and Newfoundland also criticized the report because of its recommendation that $8.5 billion in new federal funding be targeted to five specific programs: primary and rural healthcare, home care, diagnostic services, and catastrophic drug coverage. "It they are going to have someone else's priorities foisted upon us in exchange for cash, then that will be a very difficult discussion," warned Newfoundland Premier Roger Grimes.

These premiers have an ally in Stephen Harper, the Canadian Alliance Leader, who calls the Romanow report a "pie-in-the-sky" document that makes recommendations the federal government cannot possibly deliver. "It's unrealistic," Mr. Harper told the *Post*. "This has been on the wrong track right from the beginning, for the government to have an exclusively federal study in an area of largely provincial jurisdiction."

But premiers of the other five provinces were extremely positive in their reception. Manitoba premier Gary Doer said he has "absolutely no difficulty" being accountable to Ottawa for healthcare spending on targeted programs. And Saskatchewan Premier Lorne Calvert, who succeeded Romanow as premier, said he believes the report reflects the views of the majority of Canadians.

Canadian Heritage Party: throwing money

Alan Doerksen

ALAN DOERKSEN

CHP leader Ron Gray

OTTAWA — Ron Gray, leader of the CHP, complains that Roy Romanow's answer to the 'problem' of healthcare is to throw billions more taxpayers' dollars at it.

"It is true that Ottawa has helped create a crisis by reducing federal funding from 50 per cent to 14 per cent," Gray admits. "That disparity must be addressed. But it is also true that the problems medicare faces are caused by an aging population, by unhealthy lifestyle choices, and by new medical technologies. Merely throwing more money at these problems will result mostly in better salaries for healthcare workers; that will help to attract more people into those professions, but will only increase the cost of care for the future."

CHP believes preventive healthcare is an important approach to take. "We're pleased that the Romanow Report makes first steps in this direction… but because it is 'politically correct,' it ignores some of the most important issues. For example, we spend about $55 million a year on an elective procedure — abortion," observes Gray . The CHP is encouraged by the Romanow Report's reference to prevention initiatives targeted initially at reducing tobacco use and obesity, "but it doesn't go nearly far enough," Gray asserts. "There are other serious prevention goals that need to be given at least equal weight: e.g., prevention of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect, which are the most prevalent — and most preventable — of all birth defects."

Examining the concept of a new Canadian Health Covenant, Gray observes, "Experience with the Charter [of Rights and Freedoms] does not inspire confidence in this concept."

Gray approves the idea of a dedicated cash-only Canada Health Transfer from the federal government to the provinces, with targeted funding for home care, a new Rural and Remote Access Fund, and several other services, as long as this is on a transitional basis.

Regarding the recommendation of coverage for palliative home care services to support people in their last six months of life, Gray says, "The limitation to 'last six months' ... is unrealistic, in that it presupposes the omniscience of the healthcare providers. Palliative care at home should be implemented whenever the patient and/or family and physician agree it is appropriate."

Examining the idea of integrating aboriginal healthcare services, Gray observes, "This could best be accomplished by the implementation of some of the provisions of the RCAP [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples]" which recommended giving "control of aboriginal entitlements to an aboriginal Parliament and local self-government agencies."

'Definitely Not the Romanow Report'

Alan Doerksen

HALIFAX — The Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS), a Halifax-based public policy think-tank, is especially critical of the Romanow report's opposition to so-called "two-tiered" healthcare, in which private health services co-exist with public ones.

In reaction, AIMS released *Definitely Not the Romanow Report: Achieving Equity, Sustainability, Accountability and Consumer Empowerment in Canadian Health Care* on Nov. 26.

AIMS' report's main recommendations are:

- specialized, non-profit and for-profit clinics to deliver publicly funded services;
- medical savings accounts;
- an annual deductible of $325 to be paid by all citizens except those in the lowest income brackets;
- asking Canadians to rank in order of importance which health services should be publicly funded.

AIMS president Brian Lee Crowley is co-author of the alternate report. He recently wrote in the *National Post* that Canada already has "two-tiered" healthcare. One example is Henry Morgentaler's private abortion clinics. "Moreover, technology is allowing the remote delivery of ever more health services, so the ability of governments to frustrate patients' desire to get better and faster treatment is declining, and that decline will accelerate. The debate, therefore, is really about how many tiers and under what conditions. And many of these tiers are beyond government control."

Crowley argues, "Canada is almost alone in the Western world in outlawing people paying privately for services that are also publicly insured. One consequence of this is that there are many services, such as drugs or home care, that we cannot afford to cover publicly, whereas they are often publicly insured elsewhere." However, the Romanow report has recommended that home care and prescription drugs be paid for under the Canada Health Act.

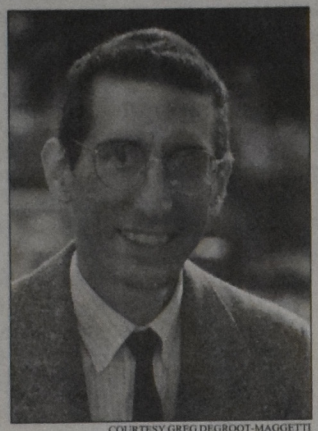
News/Politics

Social justice agencies approve Romanow's recommendations

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO – Christian social justice agencies such as Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) and the Ecumenical Healthcare Network (EHN) are pleased with the Romanow Report on healthcare, especially its focus on values, and its rejection of further privatization.

"What we appreciate is that the commissioner has tried to frame his recommendations in the context of values," says Stephen Allen, a co-chair of EHN (which is a project of the Canadian Council of Churches). Allen is also associate secretary of justice ministries with the Presbyterian Church of Canada.



COURTESY GREG DEGROOT-MAGGETTI

Greg DeGroot-Maggetti

A sacred moment

Last May, EHN submitted a brief to Romanow which also focused on values. "That we see some of those values reflected in the report means we got it right," asserts Allen. In fact, many of EHN's ideas are reflected in the Romanow Report, including the concept of a Healthcare Covenant, a focus on more preventative care, coverage of home care and pharmacare, and a national drug program..

"The biblical basis of covenant: that's where we're coming from," explains Allen. "It's more than a financial relationship. The moment at which care is given is a sacred moment."

But Allen observes that Romanow's concept of covenant "hasn't always got great press in the last few weeks."

"We welcome the inclusion of homecare," says Allen. Coverage of pharmacare would be "a comprehensive and bold step forward," he adds.

EHN also welcomes plans to help rural and remote parts of Canada, and to introduce a Catastrophic Drug Transfer (which would protect Canadians against the "catastrophic" impact of high-cost drugs).

Allen approves of Romanow's rejection of greater private sector involvement with healthcare. He notes that Romanow asked early on for "briefs that demonstrated that for-profit healthcare is more efficient and more equitable. He didn't get *one*."

On the topic of privatized healthcare, Allen contends, "The system south of the border is the most expensive in the world."

The federal government should increase its share of healthcare spending to 25 per cent of costs, as the report recommends, says Allen: "The principle behind that is if the federal government wants input, they can't do it if the provinces say, 'You're only paying 10 cents of a dollar.'"

The report has "energized public discussion of health," he says, but thinks the report should have said more about "social determinants of health" – such as the connection between low incomes and poor health.

Confronting dilemmas

Greg DeGroot-Maggetti, socio-economic concerns co-ordinator for CPJ, agrees on that point, but concedes it "was beyond the mandate of the commission." Yet, Canada needs to take strong measures to deal with factors affecting health, such as access to affordable housing.

DeGroot-Maggetti also opposes the idea of further privatization of healthcare services. If that should happen, it would "inevitably" result in wealthy people getting preferential access to healthcare.

Looking at the report's recommendations about workers from developing countries, he observes that a lot of qualified people have come to Canada to do healthcare work, but they aren't able to work in their chosen area because of Canada's different medical standards. New Canadians should not be excluded, he asserts. But he agrees with Romanow that Canada should not take healthcare professionals away from countries that need them.

Because governments have cut back support of university education in Canada, this has driven up the cost of higher education and made it more difficult for low-income people to get training. "We can't see recruiting from abroad as a substitute" to giving proper medical training to Canadians, says DeGroot-Maggetti.

He appreciates the recommendation that federal health money should come "with strings attached." The "recommendation for creating a dedicated health cash transfer is very good," says DeGroot-Maggetti. "It's very hard to track where our health tax dollars go. Canadians have a right to know. That kind of accountability has to be there."

Globe and Mail columnist Jeffrey Simpson has speculated that new healthcare money will go largely to higher salaries for healthcare workers. DeGroot-Maggetti agrees that "some of that will obviously be spent on salaries," but he sees that as a good thing. It could slow a "brain-drain" of healthcare workers to the U.S.

Coverage of home care and pharmacare is "a logical recommendation," says DeGroot-Maggetti.

Despite the costs of implementing the Report, he sees improved healthcare as a greater priority than tax cuts or paying down the national debt.

Turkey is a pivotal country

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

The European Union is on the brink of an unprecedented expansion. Up to 10 new members could be accepted, but Turkey will likely not be among them. Despite this, no one wants finally to reject Ankara's longstanding application.

To begin with, Turkey is a pivotal country occupying an historic land bridge between Europe and the Middle East. Although it has experienced periods of autocratic rule, beginning with that of its founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the 1920s and '30s, it has been decidedly more democratic than any of its Muslim neighbors to the south and east. Moreover it has long had a pro-western outlook, beginning at least in 1952, when it joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. And Turkey's largest city, Istanbul, looks set once again to become Europe's largest city, much as Constantinople was during the Middle Ages. In short, Turkey is too large and important to ignore.

However, its very size, coupled with its Islamic culture, will likely keep it out of the EU over the long term. Of the current and potential member states of the EU, Turkey has the second highest population at some 64 million, outranked only by Germany with 82 million. France, Italy and the United Kingdom each have just under 60 million inhabitants. Most of the other countries have far fewer.

This might not be an insuperable obstacle to Turkish membership, were it not for the demographic future of Europe as a whole. According to **population.com**, most European countries will lose population over the next half century, if current birth and death rates continue. Italy will lose the most, having declined by as many as 15 million people. Only Cyprus, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway and Turkey will show a population increase. Nineteen others will decline.

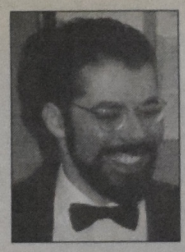
Less than a vibrant new actor

In this context, the EU may eventually appear to be less than the vibrant new actor on the international scene that its proponents hope it to become. It may resemble nothing more than a newly merged megachurch, bringing together several fading predecessor bodies and thus masking the fact that its pews are increasingly empty and its membership aging. The illusion of largeness and dynamism is there for a time, but the less rosy reality will become evident with the passage of time and of the generations.

Turkey's growth will be phenomenal

Not so with Turkey. Not only is it expected to grow, but its growth will be phenomenal. By mid-century it is expected to have more than 100 million people, far outranking Germany's 73 million. Were Turkey a part of the EU by then, and if it were still the poorest country in Europe, open borders and freedom of mobility would bring huge numbers of Turks into the heart of Europe. What the Ottoman armies were unable to do at the siege of Vienna in 1683, Turkey might accomplish overnight with its accession to the EU. At least that's the fear of many European citizens, even if they are reluctant to express this openly.

Turkey has been waiting at the door of Europe for many years. A realistic prospect of EU membership might be incentive for it to clean up its political house, including improving its human rights record and resolving the nearly three-decades-old Cyprus stalemate. If it were to be definitively excluded from the new Europe, it might turn its attention eastwards, where several ethnically-related central Asian countries might make strategic, if undemocratic, allies in a new, potentially anti-western political bloc.



Since no one wants to see this, Turkey will likely be kept waiting for some time to come.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario.

Critical columnists

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO – Some columnists in the mainstream press have also been critical of Romanow's recommendations, especially because of his opposition to privatization, and because of the expense involved in implementing the report. The *Post's* Andrew Coyne writes, "Efficiency is barely mentioned as an objective, nor is much thought given to how to achieve it. The word 'competition' appears just five times in the entire document, in every case disparagingly. Not a word about reforming hospital funding, devolving decision-making, or the rest. And of course, that long sermon on the evils of allowing private providers even to bid for government contracts." Romanow "suggests our system's costs compare favorably with other countries (in fact, we spend third-most per capita among the large developed countries), but does not mention how much less benefit we get from each dollar spent — the basis of the 30th place ranking we received in the World Health Organization's recent

See COLUMNISTS *page 7...*

Editorial

Between old and new; facing in two directions

Harry der Nederlanden

Some of you will be glad to see more of our friend Bert Hielema in this issue and wonder why I appended a label to his article as if it were a package of smokes. Others will groan because they're tired of his gloom-and-doom and his constant criticism of our present way of life and now his pessimism regarding the church.

But there is solid precedent in the Christian tradition for Hielema's dark musings on contemporary events. A glance at the pope's meditation on a passage from Jeremiah and a quick review of some of CC's stories about the church in Pakistan, Nigeria, Indonesia, of the AIDS plague in Africa, of the lawlessness and hopelessness in Colombia and other Latin American countries, of the ongoing violence in the Middle East, of the sabre-rattling by the U.S. and the inculcation of hatred by radical Islamic leaders – and we quickly realize that the picture of our time could be painted in much darker colors than those used by Hielema.

The call to daily conversion

Even when he challenges us to reconsider some major Reformed strengths, such as our penchant for creating a comprehensive umbrella of Christian organizations to give expression to a holistic faith, such challenges, too, are part of our Reformed biblical heritage. Nothing we have made, no matter how holy the motivation, is sacrosanct. At the heart of the biblical faith is the call to daily conversion: *semper reformanda*.

This is why for the Puritans almost every occasion for celebration also gave rise to a Jeremiad, a prophetic warning of God's impending judgment. God's people never bask in their own success; they express gratitude — and worry about complacency (see p.24). They worry about treating God as if they can plant him in their midst like a crop of potatoes. They worry about becoming so assimilated to the surrounding culture that they become indistinguishable and are no longer a salt or a light.

But what about the joy the angels proclaimed over Bethlehem? What about the victory over the principalities and powers celebrated by Paul?

How we tell our stories

All this has a lot to do with how we see time and history – and therefore also with how we tell stories, especially stories about how someone embodies Christian virtues or how goodness is made real in human life and society. We Reformed folk like to stress the continuity of Scripture. God had a purpose in mind when he created the world and gave 'man' responsibility for making it all part of the history of God. Satan and human rebellion did not alter that purpose. So salvation history and all human history is of a piece: it is the story of the revelation and realization of God's kingdom.

We all know that's not just an external sort of thing; building churches and Christian schools and even Christian governments doesn't guarantee God-with-us. As Van Ruler points out, all these external things need to become expressions of our inmost selves. That inner transformation is not something we can do ourselves, not even with the aid of vibrant churches, lively Christian schools, dedicated Christian labor unions, Christian farmer federations, Christian political action groups and Christian businesses. We cannot, we confess again and again, not even if we devote every spare hour and all our financial resources to "kingdom causes," gradually establish God's kingdom here on earth.

A passage I came upon in a book by Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ*, brings out what I'm getting at:

"...Paul's discussion of Christ as the second Adam means setting him over against the first Adam as the head of a new humanity. He repairs the damage caused by the first. As such, he marks a new start every bit as much as the first Adam represents the beginning of the race. Hence, when the angel announces to Mary the impending birth of a son, it is presented as a new creation (Lk. 1:34-5). The Holy Spirit was to come upon her, the power of the Most High would overshadow her. This is strongly reminiscent of the creation account in Genesis chapter 1, where the Spirit of God hovers over the face of the waters. The conception by the Holy Ghost is similarly a sovereign, divine act of creation, a radically new beginning as the conception of a new world (cf. 2 Cor.5:17)."

I underlined this passage, not just because it brought together Christmas and New Year, but also because it suggests how we should deal with that discontinuity/continuity tension in our understanding of time and our (good) works in time. How we represent our own achievements and tell our own stories are very much wound up with this irruption of the Word made flesh into our time, into our history, into the community of mankind.

We don't realize what a phenomenal difference this makes because we are overly familiar with living in the new space, the new time created by the coming of God-in-the-flesh. Before this irruption, humanity was encapsulated in its own traditional world ruled by nature-gods. In traditional (heathen) societies, our environment was named by distant forefathers once and for all. It was sacred, imbued with gods. We could say or make nothing new, nothing different from our forefathers. We were encapsulated in a time that is an endless repetition of the same.

Old and new chapters of history

After Christ, the story of the unfolding of God's kingdom in human history falls into two chapters: one we call old and the other new. It's a doubleness that has exercised theologians since the early church. Despite the continuity – the same God, Creator and Redeemer, holds fast to his original promises – there is a discontinuity so profound that even the smartest and the most pious minds (especially them) in Israel missed the big event.

Imagine that: an entire nation, all its religious holidays and rituals, its culture and schooling, its social and religious institutions – all were built on the promises of a coming Messiah. And when he arrives, hardly anyone notices. Suppose Americans hadn't noticed the planes hitting the Twin Towers.

A few hundred years after the big event, however, the Western world was so impressed by the pivotal nature of Christ's birth that it divided its calendar into B.C. and A.D. This doesn't mean, however, that we have left B.C. behind and live wholly in an era of light and victory.

This division, this bifold structure of time, enters into our day-to-day experience of time. Every moment is transected by old and new. Paul speaks of his Christian self as torn between the old man and the new man. The universe itself groans under this tension.

The model for how we represent our lives and our works in time to ourselves was Augustine. In his *Confessions*, Augustine moves in two opposing directions at the same time. On the one hand, his life is a constant movement toward darkness and sin, but on the other it is providentially led by God toward conversion and service. The same double movement characterizes the big picture he paints of world history in The City of God.

Ever since, Christians have celebrated the big events of history in a double, ambivalent way. Like the prophets, they have seen in the events of their time (even in those they have helped shape) an inexorable slide toward apostasy and idolatry. But at the same time, they have celebrated the irresistible triumph and rule of God-in-Christ in this era *anno domini*.

So any moment, whether in the Christian's life or in the life of his culture, can be illuminated in terms of this tension between old and new, between the inertia of the closed and the effervescence of that which opens up to his glory. The very darkness and weight of time presses out of us the cry, "How long?" and makes us aware that he is present everywhere in his Spirit, arousing a longing for a new heaven and a new earth.

Look, listen: the whole world is crying for liberation from bondage, for light in the darkness.

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Letters

Let's create safe churches

The best way to address the problem raised in the article "A Curious Blind Spot" is to create safe churches where people who suffer abuse do not need to hide or deny it. As part of a ministry for survivors of abuse, I receive calls from women who are afraid to leave a phone number, let alone a name. They fear rejection by their church community if they name their reality. Addressing this should be a high priority for our churches.

As a catechism teacher, I sensed a problem for one of my students, but I hesitated because her father was one of the "pillars" of that church; later I learned the truth and the tragedy it caused for three generations. I can only ask God for forgiveness and do what I can to help ensure that our youth feel safe enough to talk to someone and our youth leaders are equipped to minister in such cases. This is another high priority and there are many gaps to fill.

The problem of irresponsible counselors exists and appropriate systems need to be in place in churches to discern the truth through fair processes. But an even bigger problem is continued secrecy and denial. It prevents what can be a ministry of healing.

If one book is to be read, may I suggest one not on the previous list. In *The Wounded Heart; Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse*, Dr. Dan B. Allender points the way to biblically-based healing that grows out of the lived experience of women within churches.

Kathy Vandergrift
Ottawa, Ont.

Families unnecessarily torn apart

Thank you so much for your excellent piece about false memories or the so-called recovered memory therapy. We're so happy that at least someone had the courage and the knowledge to describe and explain what happened to thousands of North American families.

We're one of these families, unnecessarily torn apart. We have gone through hours of police investigations, lie detectors and one year and a half of brainstorming "what happened to our loving daughter?" Then May 1992 there was a story in the *Toronto Star* which was amazingly similar to our story.

When we phoned the given telephone number, we discovered that there was a whole group of parents in the Belleville-Trenton-Peterborough area who went through the same ordeal. All the daughters had read the book "Courage to heal" which is referred to as "the bible of incest survivors."

We wholeheartedly agree that it is time to face this problem of RMT squarely, but we parents are standing with our backs against the wall. There is so much damage done and it is hard to understand when you haven't experienced it yourself.

We need healing for our daughters (and sons) and for all the families involved. It is a long process but with God nothing is impossible. By God's grace and the support from our church family, our other sons and daughters and friends we have survived the past 12 years.

We long for the day we can embrace our daughter again and tell her we love her and always will.

Waiting parents,
Belleville, Ont.

Harry Antonides responds

Kathy Vandergrift and Mary Vander Vennen acknowledge that incompetent and irresponsible forms of therapy occur, presumably facilitating the occurrence of false accusations.

They stress or imply that my article will make it even harder for the innocent victims of abuse to come forward. I do agree with them that those responsible for dealing with all allegations need to be alert to whatever barriers to truth telling there are. Further, I do not underestimate the difficulty that the abused, especially children, face. There was nothing in my article that in any way minimized the seriousness of actual sexual abuse. On the contrary. But evil is evil in whatever form.

It is very likely that the number of false accusation is minimal compared to the actual instances of abuse. Nonetheless, the damage inflicted on the falsely accused, as numerous stories in the press and the courts during the past decade has shown, is just as devastating and life ruining as when real abuse takes place. I do not believe that the attempt to confront one kind of evil should stand in the way of exposing another kind of evil. In any case, justice demands that in every instance great care is taken that all accusations are carefully investigated and do not begin with an assumption of guilt.

The sad reality is that in Canada and the U.S. there has been a serious miscarriage of justice inflicted on countless families because of a radical feminist, anti-family and anti-male bias that has become deeply ingrained in the assumptions and methods of contemporary psychotherapy. Witness the popularity of *The Courage to Heal* among therapists and their patients .

How could the kind of madness that led to the disasters of the two cases I mentioned in my article (and there have been many more) ever have occurred except the people responsible lost touch with reality and then set out to wreak havoc? That was the main point of my article, which both respondents alluded to in passing, but did not address.

Harry Antonides
hantonides@sympatico.ca

Abused fear they won't be believed

I hope that people reading "A Curious Blind Spot" (Nov. 18) who need to come forward to report their experiences of abuse will not be deterred by the article. Many of these people already have the fear that they will not be believed if they make an accusation. We must acknowledge that the painful situations Harry Antonides refers to occur, and that there are incompetent authors and therapists who are following their private agendas. However a much more frequent scenario still is that credible allegations of abuse, unprompted by suggestion, are not taken seriously enough by church leaders who are more eager to protect the alleged offender than to follow through on allegations of abuse.

Mary Vander Vennen,
Toronto, Ont.

A vision of history

In the November 4 edition there was an interesting editorial about a vision of history. Of course, as a historian I am interested in such a vision. Yet there was something rather ironic about the editorial.

When *CC* moved recently, the editor decided to throw out some archival material that he did not deem important. The editor may have a theoretical idea about a vision of history, but he does not seem to have much of an idea about the practical aspect. I realize that not all material is useful to be preserved, but correspondence is often crucial to understand how an organization worked and "thought." I don't know what material he threw out but it could have helped later researchers.

How can one talk about a theoretical vision of history when one does not fully understand how the sources of history have been treated?

Bert den Boggende,
Brooks, Alta.

Editor's response:

What Christian leaders like Kuyper, Runner and Colson convey to us is a vision of history. That's something quite different from a philosophy of history or theories about the writing of history.

Very, very few of us become philosophers or historians, but no educated Christian can do without a vision, rooted in Scripture, of where God's people find themselves relative to their own time and culture.

Mr. Den Boggende does raise an interesting matter. For the last decade or so, CC and many other organizations have no longer been producing the kind of archives Den Boggende expresses concern about. Almost all correspondence is done by e-mail, and that has a very short shelf-life.

Almost all my letters, for example, will vanish: they will be deleted after a few months or years, or they will become unreadable because electronic data deteriorates or because the hardware and software has changed.

The work I did on my thesis, for example, is all on 5.25 floppies. I can no longer access it because 5.25 floppy drives are a thing of the past as is the word processor I used.

So although most of us are glad of e-mail, many historians are not.

The editor

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Frightfully low levels of development aid

Your apologetic note on foreign aid at the end of Bert Hielema's commentary from November 18 attempted to defend, in a sense, the level of assistance given by Western governments.

Whether or not most Americans — or Canadians — prefer to support international community development through church and other non-governmental development agencies is irrelevant to the frightfully low levels of development aid offered by our respective governments. There is very little growth in foreign aid, much of which is targeted to projects that have very little benefit for the poor, and our governments still fall dramatically short of their stated targets of 0.7 per cent of GDP. The Canadian government gives approximately 0.25 per cent, while the U.S. government gives about 0.10 per cent.

Yes, levels of aid given by agencies like World Vision, Red Cross and others may be on the rise because of the public's generosity, but government assistance in the form of foreign aid is not rising to any significant degree. When increases do occur, such as was promised by Prime Minister Chrétien this past year, most of the money is directed towards mega-projects such as dam building, major institutional reform of things like a country's entire education or health system, political reform and democratic development, and, primarily, trade development. Many of these programs have a larger positive economic impact in Canada then they do in the country where they occur because of regulations on sourcing of goods and human resources.

Scant funding for small-scale projects

There has been virtually no new funding for small-scale, community-owned development projects which, I would argue, have a greater impact on a country's development. The NGO community in Canada — and around the world — is being marginalized because of the prevailing dogma that says that trade and economic reform will trickle down to benefit the poor rural subsistence farmers and others living day to day on less than a dollar per day.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not add that the organization that employs me, the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), has had to *cut* program budgets over the past two years and our fiscal outlook for the coming year is also not as good as it could be, primarily due to a slumping American economy.

Visit **www.realityofaid.org** for a more thorough analysis of foreign aid.

Matt Van Geest,
Christian Reformed World Relief Committee,
Burlington, Ont.

We need analysis informed by the Bible

I am writing to comment on the 'Nose for News' column of December 2, 2002. In this article, Bert Hielema takes a rather sarcastic look at the politics of oil, American foreign policy and events in the Mideast.

I find it disturbing that he makes his predictions and assumptions without looking at what the Bible might have to say about the situation. It is easy to read the glib type of analysis which Mr. Hielema gives in any secular newspaper, but what we need is analysis informed by the Bible. If he thinks he might be making prophetic predictions, he should look at some found in the Bible.

The main point here is that God has already written world history. He planned it, he orchestrates its events and his plans will be fulfilled (Gen.1:1, Isa.54:16). For example, the centuries of the Jew's exile from their homeland was predicted as was the Holocaust (Zech.10:11, Jer.30:23,24). God also planned the return of the Jews to the promised land (Eze.34:13). It is possible that the predicted return is not yet complete as there are still six million Jews living in the United States. In Zech.10:10, God speaks of bringing his people back in such numbers that there 'will not be room enough for them.'

While there is debate about this type of interpretation, as Christians we can be certain that God is in control of it and that he is not yet done with his people in Israel. So let us approach events in the Mideast with an eye to what God has planned, so that in end, all the glory goes to him and his holiness is held up (Eze.36:22).

Meint DeJong
Stirling, Ont.

This year, resolve to quit

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman

This year, I have resolved to be a quitter.

Not that I'm giving up sacred vows, embracing laziness, shirking responsibility, or becoming a hermit. I just want to break free in brand new ways. In fact, I have concluded that this sort of "quitting for a time" is basic to Christian spirituality.

One example is my decision to quit working so hard. Professors, teachers, missionaries, pastors — all roles that a chaplain plays — burn out if they don't quit at some point. So I have been graced with a six month sabbatical starting in January. I'm going to quit my home town, travel to a new place, and do some of the reading, writing, and researching that I have wanted to do for a long time. I hope to come back refreshed, revitalized, and eager to re-engage the postmodern campus.

This quitting did not come easy. We all gather momentum as the days roll by, and it can be difficult to slow down and alter course. We live life intensely, and like a large truck on an icy road, loaded down with so many important, urgent deliveries, it may take a few hundred meters before we can come to a rest. We get stuck in familiar routines where we operate more like a machine than a soft, breathing, human being.

Sabbath: Time to quit

The idea of a sabbatical comes from the biblical command to quit working at least one day of the week and intentionally reflect on our life before God. In fact, God built this rhythm of work and rest into the very fabric of the universe when he created it in six days and quit for a rest on the seventh. In Lev. 25 God commands that land be plowed, tilled, and gardened for six years, "but during the seventh year the land shall have a complete rest, a sabbath to the Lord."

If you think about the Ten Commandments in this light, they are all about quitting: quit lying, stealing, killing, sleeping around, coveting, and making idols. God gives us tremendous freedom in this way: he does not tell us what to do. He only gives us boundaries we must not cross. Within that, we can be enthusiastically creative. Within that, life flourishes as God intended it to.

So why not quit being afraid of change and growth? Quit being a victim of your self-destructive addictions. Quit being a rigid thinker who stubbornly holds to small ideas that prevent you from serving God and loving your neighbor. Quit pretending to be bigger than you are, and quit assuming that you can't make a difference. Quit trying so hard to quit.

Fasting: Quitting for life

Fasting is quitting in the form of spiritual discipline. Fasting prevents us from becoming too attached to those things that are not God in order for us to draw nearer to that which is God. Fasting is not intended to deprive us of life, a punishment for our sinful condition. Fasting is for life — to strengthen us, re-attach us to God, who is the true source of life and vitality.

So to quit sex, books, food, work, kids, spouse, drinks, coffee, chocolate — whatever we may come to depend on more than God — can be a powerful way of re-invigorating our life. These things we would quit only for a season, of course. There is a time for everything, even a time for such things as uprooting, tearing down, killing, warring, weeping, mourning, rending, hating, and refraining from embracing (Ecc. 3). In this context, quitting work seems pretty tame. But this is what godly wisdom is all about: knowing when to quit what, and then when to quit quitting it.

On that note, I am quitting one more thing this January: bachelorhood. This is not a sabbath or a fast, but a quitting for good. Once bound to my wonderful new companion, I will make vows to *never quit*, even though there will be sabbath times where I feel single again. This is it: I resolve to quit bachelorhood forever and move on with eagerness for the new life that awaits.

Resolve to quit and break free this year. Think of it this way: it's much easier than starting grand new habits. Don't add on more, but subtract, simplify. Live with a lightness and levity. Quitting makes much more space in your life for God, and for the abundant life he ordained from that seventh day onward.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed campus chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont.

Delighted with 'Why should I go to church?' features

Alice and I are delighted that Van Ruler's beautiful book, *Why I should attend Church?* is being translated by you, at least in part. Thank you for your work and vision. During the early years of the '60s Van Ruler was one of my teachers at the University of Utrecht. In fact, one of the propositions added to my doctoral thesis pointed out that Van Ruler's meditations are nurturing, liberating and a joy to the heart.

We deeply appreciate CC and wish you the Lord's precious nearness in 2003.

Alice and Jack Hielema
Prince George, B.C.

P.S. Perhaps it's interesting to share with you that I've been teaching a course in "Comparative Religions" at the University of Northern B.C. There's always much interest — 70 or more students attend.

EnviroTIP. . .

(NC)—Before you discard the Christmas wrappings, take a second to see if they can be used for something else. About a third of the garbage in landfills is packaging.

- News Canada

EnviroTIP. . .

(NC)—Watch for local announcements on Christmas tree pick-up after the holidays. Mulch made from trees is good for the gardens and means less waste.

- News Canada

Illegal migrants have become 'hot potato' in Europe

Bernadette Sauvaget

PARIS, France (ENI)—French church leaders are questioning European immigration policies after police moved in on a church in the northern port city of Calais just before dawn on November 14 and evacuated 99 illegal migrants who had occupied the building for four days.

The migrants, mostly Afghans and Iraqi Kurds trying to reach Great Britain, had taken refuge in the church after the closing of the nearby Red Cross-administered Sangatte centre, located near the English Channel tunnel.

"The majority of [the migrants] already have family in Great Britain ready to welcome them," said Jean-Marc Dupeux, general secretary of Cimade, an ecumenical aid service.

Asylum under spotlight

The issue of asylum and of immigration has been under the spotlight in France since last summer, and religious leaders have joined the debate.

The French government decided to close the Sangatte centre to new arrivals. "I wanted to send a strong signal to the world that we are not taking any more refugees at Sangatte," declared Nicolas Sarkozy, the interior minister.

Despite this measure, the flow of illegal immigrants has not slowed, forcing several hundred migrants to wander in the region, according to humanitarian organizations.

In the last few days the authorities had made arrangements to furnish emergency shelter to the migrants and had advised them to file official requests for asylum in France.

Nearly 100 Kurds and Afghans who did not have legal documents found refuge, at the end of last week in the church of Saint-Pierre-Saint-Paul in Calais, opened to them by the communist municipality at the request of the parish priest.

"What is going to happen now for all of those who are sleeping outside and who are going to continue to arrive in Calais?" said the priest, the Rev. Jean-Pierre Boutoille, after the police operation.

Dupeux told ENI: "By closing the Sangatte centre, we are only treating a symptom and not the sickness. Asylum-seekers are a hot potato for the countries of the European Union. Each country has reinforced its legislation, hoping to pass the potato on to its neighbor. There is no European policy on this issue."

The Cimade leader also expressed the wish that Great Britain "take responsibility," emphasizing that many of the illegal migrants from Sangatte have family contacts on the other side of the Channel.

The Catholic church is also asking for a European-level policy. "The question of immigrants without papers is one that concerns the whole of society, not only the church," asserted Monsignor Jean-Luc Brunin, auxiliary bishop of Lille and president of the French bishops' committee on migration.

Catholics and Protestants are considering common action they could take next January on the subject of asylum seekers, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Associating Cimade, Catholic Aid and CCFD (Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development), this initiative would show, according to Dupeux, that "asylum is a very important value defended by Christians."

Columnists critical of Romanow Report

... continued from page 3

survey of health care systems around the world."

The *Globe's* Jeffrey Simpson argues, "The extra billions funneled into healthcare are supposed to improve service to patients and not inflate providers' earnings." But he contends that Romanow is "dreaming" if he believes that. "Powerful doctors associations and well-organized unions for nurses and technicians will gobble up some of those billions as surely as mice will gorge on available cheese."

Simpson also criticizes Romanow's recommendation that we need a Canadian Health Covenant. "Elsewhere, healthcare is a vital public service," he writes. "Nowhere outside Canada, however, has it achieved the status of national icon. Now, in Canada, it might rise even higher in the national firmament – to that of a covenant." He argues that no government should spend as much money on healthcare as the report recommends, if that means healthcare spending will always grow at a faster rate than the economy.

Caring and sharing

Building Trust
Vicky Van Andel Ed.

"Men have to take care of themselves nowadays; it is not like it used to be," I overheard a young woman say while talking to a group of women friends. The comment was made in passing. The women were having fun, laughingly tossing ideas back and forth. There was no hint of malice in the comment. And I happened to hear it in passing.

The comment stuck in my mind, however, and made me think. I don't know the context it was said in and it doesn't matter. It stopped me in my tracks and triggered my thoughts at that particular moment. I began to toss it around in my mind. What did she mean by *used to be*? I am of the *used to be* generation. I produced the sons who are now the ages of their husbands. She is talking about my time as a mother!

How have husband-wife relationships changed?

A question arose in my mind. In what way did men take care of themselves differently in the past as compared to now? How have husband and wife relationships changed from the last generation to the present?

I decided to explore this idea a bit further; just for fun. I started by talking to several women at different stages in their lives. The first person I approached was my mother. She is a widow and 83 years old. "Mom," I said, "I am wondering in what way you took care of dad when you were married and at home while caring for a family of eleven children? How do you remember that stage in your life in terms of caring for Dad?" Mom looked at me in surprise. She stated, "Taking care of Dad? I don't think I took care of Dad at all. Dad took care of me! He went out to work every day, in good weather and bad, and earned money to provide for the family. Yes, I made coffee for him and washed his clothes because I was home all day, but I did not take care of him. He took care of himself and all of us and we raised our family together. I had it easier than he did, really."

The second person I quizzed was a younger relative. She works part-time outside of the home. I asked her the same question. She told me that when she goes to work, she and her husband try to divide the childcare and other family responsibilities between them. "But when I am home," she stated, "I do take care of him, in a way. I organize the house and make sure everything gets done and all the activities of the kids are planned. I am better at it than he is. He was brought up having lots of things done for him. But am I really taking care of him? No, I don't think so. In the end I think he takes care of himself. He goes to work, looks after the cars and fixes things around the house. Then she said: "Actually, we have a division of labor. He does some things and I do other things. It took a while for us to work out a system, a pattern that works for us, but slowly over the years we figured out how to manage our family together. Our system may not work for other people, but it works for us."

The last person I also talked to was an unmarried friend who would like to be married some time in the future. I said, "What would you look for in a person you would like to share your life with?" Her first comment was: "I would like that person to take care of my needs." Knowing how fiercely independent she is, I probed further.

Then she stated: "What I mean is, I would like that person to *share* responsibilities with me. I would like to live with someone who can allow me to be independent and who can be independent himself; someone who can share tasks with me, help me make difficult decisions and have fun with me. I would like a partner to *share* my life."

Different ways of taking care

Based on my discussion with these three women, it would seem that when we talk about taking care of other people we mean different things. We could mean *caring* by way of tasks such as preparing meals, doing laundry or ironing shirts. In that way, men may be taking care of themselves more. But it could also mean sharing the work between a husband and wife, thereby creating a mutually satisfying and enriching relationship; one in which roles are blended. In that context men are merely doing different activities from the ones they used to do.

My mother did not think that caring for her family and making a home for my dad translated into caring for him. She took responsibility for a particular role in raising the children and it included my dad. He fulfilled his role in a different way and it included my mom. On the other hand, my friend and relative also take responsibility for their roles, but they do it differently. They live in a different society. Do they care more or less for their husbands, or do husbands take more care of themselves because of that?

I know that my sons often iron their own shirts. I also know that I ironed their shirts for them when they were growing up. Does that mean they are taking care of themselves more now than they used to? Or are they just taking care of themselves a little differently?

I would like to think that the young women were really talking about sharing the responsibilities of family life with their husbands. In this society women have more opportunities and choices. It is therefore more necessary to share roles and tasks between couples and families.

Learning to share tasks requires conscious negotiations between spouses in order to find effective ways to manage all the responsibilities associated with raising a family. This process can sometimes be difficult. It requires a deep commitment to each other as well as to the children. It also requires a developing self-awareness, a learning about oneself. It requires goal setting and adapting these to the other people in the family. Sometimes it means getting professional help to sort it all out. But when we succeed we are the better for it. We achieve relationships which can function in mutually supportive and healthy ways.

I have a 96-year-old friend. She believes that the *used to be* time was an easier time for people. "Roles were clear then," she says. "I was happy to stay home with the children and my husband went out to work" At the same time she knows that I don't quite see it that way. "Relationships are more balanced now." I say. "There is more room for the expression of individual gifts; more equality in relationships." We listen to each other's point of view and then have a good laugh together....

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of Building Trust. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her by fax at: 1-780-473-0970, or by e-mail at: vanandel@oanet.com

Church

Dalits find freedom in Christianity

... *continued from page 1*

in Dalit areas and even to help Dalit children to accept Christianity. He strongly advised Christians to take advantage of this opportunity while Dalits are open to change and leaving the oppressive Hindu religion and caste system.

Dr. Joseph D'Souza, president of Operation Mobilization India and president of the All India Christian Council, declared that Christians will start schools for the Dalit children.

In his speech, Dr. Kancha Ilaiah, associate professor of political science at Hyderabad's Osmania University and author of *Why I am Not a Hindu*, said, "No Islamic, Buddhist, or Christian leader has forced us to convert from Hinduism. It is the high caste leaders from Hindu society who have forced us to turn to other religious faiths. There are no high caste leaders that would love us and care for us like Christians do." He recently became a Christian. He challenged any high priests of Hinduism to do what Dr. M.A. Thomas has been doing for the Dalits.

Dr. M.A. Thomas, founder and chairman of Hopegivers International and Emmanuel Mission International, who is referred to in India as the Archbishop of Evangelical Christians, spoke to those seeking baptism from the words of Jesus Christ recorded in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

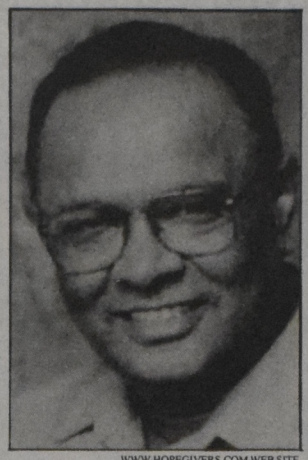
Burden of sin and caste

He invited all the Dalits to come to Christ with all their burden of sin and burden of caste, to find true forgiveness, love and rest in Jesus Christ. Dr. Thomas washed their feet, embraced them and kissed many of these Dalits who have become Christians and had come to obey the Lord in baptism. By seeing this expression of love and acceptance, many Dalit leaders promised to go back to their villages and tell their friends that there is no caste difference in the Christian faith and how the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sins if we repent and trust in Jesus.

Dr. Thomas explained to them, "Within the religions of India there is a belief that the gods made certain people, namely Dalits, to serve the high caste. But the God of the Bible calls us all to serve one another in love."

After the event, 300 cobblers came to be baptized. The leader of these shoemakers said, "There are over 800,000 in our caste who also want to accept Christ."

High caste members of Hindu society are afraid they will lose their power and position when the groups they have enslaved for centuries abandon their religious and social structure.



WWW.HOPEGIVERS.COM WEB SITE

Dr. M.A. Thomas

Two major incidents which happened recently in India help to fill in the background and explain why 9,000 Dalits came seeking Christian baptism and why they were stopped by the police.

First, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr. Jayalalitha, pushed through an ordinance at odds with the constitution of India, called the anti-conversion bill. The bill says if any Dalit is converted or receives baptism the one who is baptized and the one who does the baptizing both must pay a penalty of $2,200 (100,000 Rupees) and be sentenced to four years imprisonment. For a poor Dalit earning less than one dollar per day, such a fine could not be paid in several lifetimes.

9 killed for skinning cow

Second, a few men from one of the Dalit groups skinned a dead cow so that they could sell the skin and make their living. Hindus venerate cattle and the skinning of the dead cow was sacrilege to them. Nine of these Dalit people were killed by the high caste Hindus. When the news media asked them why they killed these Dalits, the response was, "The dead cow was more important than the Dalits' lives." This enraged Dalits all across India.

The so-called high caste Hindus comprise only six per cent of the population of India. Their ancestors were invaders to India who made the remaining 94 per cent of the native people of India their slaves and ruled over them for about 3,000 years. Before the invasion, the original native peoples of India, had one of the highest civilizations of the world even in 2500 B.C. The native kings, rulers, and all others were made slaves and untouchables to the high caste invaders. Then the native Indians were made "untouchable" to each other by being divided into 4,000 castes. They cannot touch each other, marry each other, cannot even drink water from each other's houses or even draw water from each other's wells. A low caste cannot even take a bath in a river, pool, or lake where high caste people take baths. The low caste cannot go to a Hindu temple where the high caste attend, and they cannot worship the high caste gods.

Since 1948, when India gained independence and people were given freedom of religion, 25 per cent of these "untouchables" became Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Sikhs. They were no longer called "untouchable."

Worse than animals

Udit Raj, president of a Dalit organization (scheduled castes and scheduled tribes), has said, "Dalits are treated worse than animals, like dogs and snakes." These Dalits are the descendants of Indians who were civilized two-an-a-half millennia before the birth of Christ, with steel industries, crockery, art work and architecture. All these cultured people were barred from reading, studying, or listening to any teachings. If caught, they were punished by having their eyes blinded and their ears sealed with hot lead.

William Carey, a famous Christian missionary to India, was one of the first people who started education for the Dalits. This was long before India became an independent country with freedom of religion. He was summoned nine times by the East India Company through the influence of the high caste members of Hindu society to close the schools and present himself before the court. The high caste opposed the education of the Dalits.

Gifted Dalits

Because of education provided by missions, India has benefited from the gifts of several Dalits: Dr. Ambedkar, wrote the Indian Constitution; Dr. K.R. Narayanan, became president of India; Gag Jeevan Ram, one of the Deputy Prime Ministers of India; and thousands of other Dalits became scientists, medical doctors, judges, writers, teachers, professors, vice chancellors, army officers, and political leaders — all because of the ducational opportunity they had received through the influence of William Carey.

Dr. Thomas, who as a Bishop oversees 4,300 churches, has met many of their national leaders. They requested only one thing: "We don't want your money or food, only start a school in every one of our villages. Give an education to our children, because 110 million of our children have no education, 86 million children do child labor. The life expectancy in our villages is less than 30 years. Please open a clinic with a nurse. Preach the good news to our people, how to be free from the bondage of sin, free from the dread of 8.6 million reincarnations, from hell."

Dr. Thomas is accepted by the Dalits but he is never called "untouchable" by high caste Hindus because he is a Christian and so he is outside their social structure.

Dalit leaders are working in Tamil Nadu over the next three months to see one million Dalits turn to Christ. In every village they ask for one school, one church, and one clinic — a pastor, a teacher, and a nurse. Hopegivers International, led by Dr. Thomas, envisions building one church, school and one clinic (called a Hope Centre) in each of the 600,000 villages of India in co-operation with all other Christians.

For more information about the ministry of Hopegivers International visit their website at: **www.hopegivers.com**

Dan Wooding is an award winning British journalist who is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times).

Strategy of polarization produces Hindu victory in India

Anto Akkara

NEW DELHI, India (ENI) — Christians in India were taken by surprise over the scale of the election triumph of the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Gujarat, an Indian state rocked by inter-religious violence earlier this year.

Surpassing all poll forecasts, the incumbent party in Gujarat won a landslide, capturing 126 of the 182 seats in the state assembly after the ballots in the December 12 election were counted.

"We were expecting something different. But, this is the reality," Vinod Kumar Malaviya, Church of North India (CNI) bishop of Gujarat diocese, told ENI.

Christians account for less than half of one per cent of Gujarat's 46 million population.

"None of us even in our wildest dreams expected the BJP to win so many seats," said Cedric Prakash, a prominent Jesuit, who described the election result as "shocking and disappointing."

The election was held against a backdrop of tension between Hindus and Muslims in the state after weeks of sectarian rioting early this year.

Many observers claimed that the BJP — the party that also heads the federal coalition government — used the recent violence to consolidate Hindu votes by focusing the election campaign on Hindu fear of Muslims.

Samson Christian, a prominent member of the CNI, said the BJP had "succeeded in creating fear among the Hindus, and [thus] consolidated their votes."

The riots earlier this year were touched off after a train carrying Hindu pilgrims from the disputed religious site of Ayodhya was torched, burning 58 Hindus to death.

'Harvest of hatred'

In retaliation, Hindu groups attacked Muslims in several towns, leading to the death of more than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims. Some non-governmental organizations have charged that state authorities condoned the violence.

The All India Christian Council in a statement posted on its web site on Monday described the BJP victory as a "harvest of hatred." The council said the election "clearly suggests that [the BJP's] strategy of retaining political power through deliberate and aggressive communal polarization has indeed paid off."

The election, dubbed a "battle for the soul of India" by the opposition Congress party, was seen by many observers as a key test for the BJP, which had recently suffered massive electoral defeats in several states.

Praveen Togadia, a senior leader of the Hindu fundamentalist VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad — or World Hindu Council) declared that the Gujarat election marked the "graveyard of secularism in India" and predicted that victory for pro-Hindu parties like the BJP would carry over into other states.

Church

Jeremiah's Lamentation

Pope John Paul II

[A meditation on Jeremiah 14:17-21 given Dec. 11, 2002.]

It is a bitter and deeply felt song that the prophet Jeremiah raises to heaven from his historical horizon (14:17-21). The context from which this lamentation arises is represented by a scourge that frequently strikes the land of the Middle East: drought. However, to this natural drama the prophet adds another no less terrifying, the tragedy of war: "If I walk out into the field, look! those slain by the sword; if I enter the city, look! those consumed by hunger" (verse 18). The description is, unfortunately, tragically present in so many regions of our planet.

CHRISTUS REX ET REDEMPTOR MUNDI WEB SITE

Jeremiah, *by Michelangelo.*

Weeping uninterruptedly

Jeremiah enters the scene with his face bathed in tears: He weeps uninterruptedly for "the daughter of his people," namely for Jerusalem. Indeed, according to a well-known biblical symbol, the city is represented by a feminine image, "the daughter of Zion." The prophet participates intimately in the "destruction" and "incurable wound" of his people (verse 17). Often his words are marked by sorrow and tears, because Israel does not allow itself to be led by the mysterious message that suffering brings with it. In another passage, Jeremiah exclaims: "If you do not listen to this in your pride, I will weep in secret many tears; my eyes will run with tears for the Lord's flock, led away to exile" (13:17).

The reason for the prophet's lacerating invocation must be found in two tragic events: the sword and famine, namely, war and want (see Jeremiah 14:18). We are, therefore, in a tormented historical situation and the portrait of the prophet and the priest, custodians of the Word of the Lord, is significant, who "forage in a land they know not".

The second part of the song (see verses 19-21) is no longer an individual lament, in the first person singular, but a collective supplication addressed to God: "Why have you struck us a blow that cannot be healed?" (verse 19). In addition to the sword and famine, there is, in fact, a greater tragedy, that of the silence of God, who no longer reveals himself and seems to be enclosed in his heaven, as though disgusted with human behavior. The questions addressed to him are, therefore, tense and explicit in a typically religious sense: "Have you cast Judah off completely? Is Zion loathsome to you?" (verse 19).

Feeling alone and abandoned

Now they feel alone and abandoned, deprived of peace, of salvation, of hope. The people, left to themselves, find themselves lost and overcome by terror.

Is not this existential loneliness, perhaps, the profound source of so much dissatisfaction, which we also perceive in our days? So much insecurity and so many inconsiderate reactions, which have their origin in having abandoned God, the rock of salvation.

At this point, there is a great change: The people return to God and address an intense prayer to him. First of all, they recognize their own sin with a brief but deeply felt confession of guilt: "We recognize, O Lord, our wickedness, ... that we have sinned against you" (verse 20). The silence of God, therefore, was provoked by man's rejection. If the people convert and return to the Lord, God will also show himself ready to go out to meet and embrace them.

God asked to remember

At the end, the prophet uses two fundamental words: "remembrance" and "covenant" (verse 21). God is asked by his people to "remember," namely, to take up again the line of his generous benevolence, manifested so many times in the past with decisive interventions to save Israel. God is asked to remember that he bound himself to his people through a covenant of fidelity and love. Precisely because of this covenant the people can be confident that the Lord will intervene to liberate and save them. The commitment he assumed, the honor of his "name," the fact of his presence in time, "the throne of his glory," impel God — after the judgment of sin and the silence — to come close to his people again and to give them again life, peace and joy.

Together with the Israelites, we too, therefore, can be certain that the Lord does not abandon us forever, but after every purifying trial he returns to "let his face shine upon you, and be gracious ... and give you peace," as stated in the priestly blessing referred to in the Book of Numbers (6:25-26).

A moving exhortation

In conclusion, we can associate Jeremiah's supplication with a moving exhortation addressed to the Christians of Carthage by St. Cyprian, bishop of that city in the third century. At a time of persecution, St. Cyprian exhorted his faithful to implore the Lord. This imploration is not identical to the supplication of the prophet, because it does not contain a confession of sins, since persecution is not a punishment for sin, but a participation in the passion of Christ. Nevertheless, it is an altogether urgent imploration, as was that of Jeremiah. "We implore the Lord, St. Cyprian says, in sincerity and concord, without ever ceasing to ask and confident of obtaining. Imploring him with moaning and weeping, as is fitting for those who are numbered among the unfortunate who weep and others who fear misfortune, among the many prostrated by the massacre and the few who remain standing. We pray that peace will soon be restored, that help will be given to us in our places of hiding and in dangers, may that which the Lord deigns to show his servants be fulfilled: the restoration of his Church, the certainty of our eternal salvation, good weather after the rain, light after darkness, peace and calm after the storm and turbulence, the merciful help of his father's love, the grandeurs that we know of the divine majesty" ("Epistula" 11, 8, in: S. Pricoco — M. Simonetti, "La Preghiera dei Cristiani," Milan, 2000, pp. 138-139).

[Translation by ZENIT]

House churches multiply in Cuba

Laurel Bryan

HAVANA, Cuba (Compass) — I awoke to see a bright light shining through the open door. Curious to see what light might be shining at 4 a.m. on a deserted island off the coast of Cuba, I rose from my bed. Outside I saw, gliding silently through the water, a small fishing boat with a moon-like lantern suspended from a wooden pole. Two fishermen sat at either end of the boat, peering intently into the water with nets poised, ready to scoop up fish as they rose to the surface, attracted by the light.

Like lights in the night

The unforgettable scene describes in many ways what is happening in the house church movement in Cuba. Surrounded by poverty and despair, Christians shine out like lights in the night. Their lives offer unusual hope to a nation devastated by 43 years of communism.

Before 1991, the only churches legally permitted in Cuba were those built before the revolution in 1959. Since then, no new churches have been built, and special permits are needed to repair existing buildings. These permits are costly and rarely granted. A Baptist church was recently asked to pay $5,000 for a permit to repair their building. With an average per capita monthly wage of between 200 and 250 Cuban pesos (less than $10), this sum was higher than the annual income for the entire church body. For many churches that have outgrown their buildings, the only solution is to meet in private homes.

In the 1970s and '80s, people attended these house meetings in fear. It was always possible that "watchers" from the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) in each block might see and report them to the police. However in 1991, a new law was passed allowing Christians to meet in private homes for the first time since the revolution.

'Worship houses'

These gatherings, known as casas cultos or "worship houses," are both neighborhood group and church. When Christians were suddenly free to invite friends and neighbors to these meetings, house churches mushroomed.

The new law was not a full ticket to freedom, however. In practice, the application of the law depends on local officials. For example, in Varadero, a popular tourist destination, house churches are forbidden to sing in their meetings. One Pentecostal house church has side-stepped this by meeting in the garage of a Catholic church, where worship is officially permitted.

In 1997, the pastor of a large Pentecostal church in Havana was called in for questioning because there were too many house churches operating in his area. He replied that he could not close down these meetings. On the contrary, he wanted to open more. The church already had 28 worship houses, each with 10 to 40 members, and demand was growing in other parts of the city.

Returning to the church office, the pastor reported his conversation with the CDR officials. Then he instructed the house church leaders to continue running their meetings until the police came in person to close them down. Since then, the groups have been left to operate in peace and the church now has 46 worship houses in different parts of the city. The same trend can be seen in evangelical denominations throughout Cuba.

An overnight change

Why are the house churches growing so dramatically now? A church secretary in Havana tells the story of Emelia (name changed to protect identity) who worked for 20 years in a sewing factory alongside a woman who constantly abused and criticized her fellow workers. Overnight Emelia's workmate changed. She began smiling, giving compliments and singing at her work station. Emelia soon learned that the woman had become a Christian. Wanting the same change for herself, she found an evangelical church the following day and gave her life to Christ. Her story is typical of many new believers in Cuba.

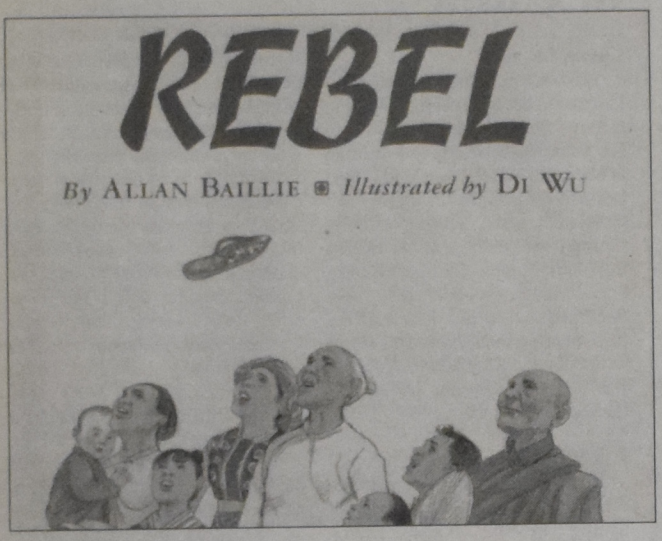
Celestina (name changed to protect identity), the wife of a pastor who died two years ago, now leads three worship houses with a total of more than 90 members every week on her block. Groups grow so fast that they are constantly dividing or looking for new places to meet. Celestina suffers from high blood pressure and a stomach ulcer, but nothing holds her back from leading the meetings.

House groups can now register with the government, but this gives no real advantage. They still need permission to build a new church. Even if permission is given, there is no guarantee of safety. A pastor in the north says that some houses used for church meetings have

See DESPITE *p. 19...*

Reviews

Kids and war



Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Since September 11, 2001 children in my neighborhood sometimes talk about war and terrorism, topics they never spoke about much before. They are sheltered children with no memory of war.

Yet around the earth war rages today as it has throughout history, and children suffer its brutal consequences. When talking to young children about difficult subjects like war, it's helpful to rely on the power of stories. Stories allow us to vicariously experience pain and terror, sadness and despair, and hope and courage. They help us tackle big issues in bite-sized pieces. And they introduce us to characters who, despite suffering, abandonment, loss of family members, and destruction of homes, discover hope in surprising places. In the picture books reviewed and listed below, read about characters like these from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burma, Germany, Iraq, and the United States.

The Bracelet

Written by Yoshiko Uchida, illustrated by Joanna Yardley.
New York: Philomel Books, 1993 ISBN 0-399-22503-X 32 pp Historical fiction picture book for Grade 2 and older.

Seven-year-old Emi does not want to leave her home, but she has no choice. The year is 1942, and Japan and America are at war. Emi and her family, along with other Japanese-Americans, are being sent to an internment camp. Before Emi leaves, her friend, Laurie, gives her a bracelet. Emi and her family arrive at the camp and move into a filthy horse stable. That night Emi loses her bracelet and never finds it. She is sad because the bracelet was the one thing that helped her remember her best friend.

Soon Emi discovers that she can remember Laurie without the help of the bracelet because the memory of Laurie lives inside of her. This story vividly portrays the upheaval, uncertainty, and humiliation Japanese-Americans experienced during World War II. It also presents characters who have the strength to endure adversity, and who cling to hope because they have memories of people that they love. The beautiful watercolor illustrations reveal Emi's vulnerability and evoke compassion for her.

Rebel

Written by Allan Baillie, illustrated by Di Wu
New York: Ticknor and Fields Books for Young Readers, 1994 ISBN 0-395-69250-4 32 pp Historical fiction picture book for Grade 2 and older.

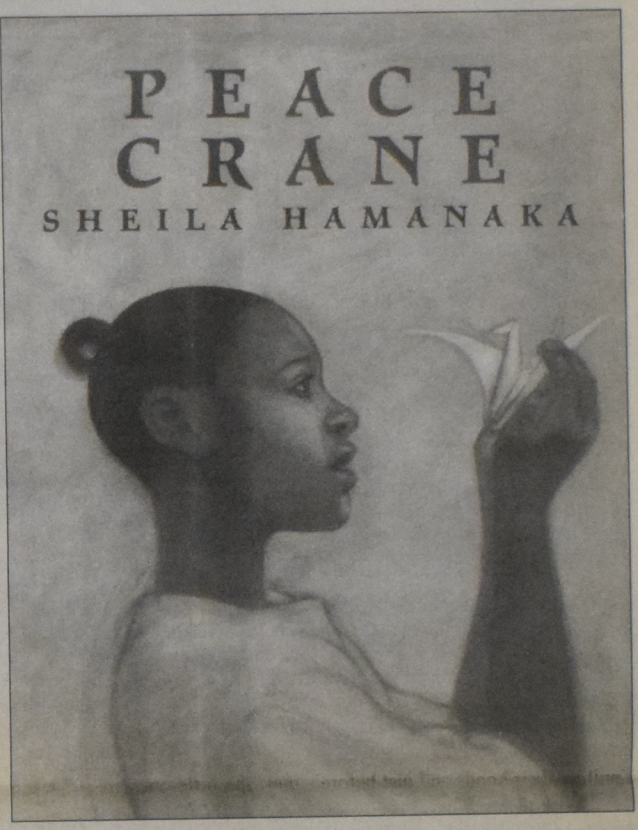
The General came across the plain of Burma with tanks, trucks, guns and soldiers. He ordered his soldiers to roll the tanks over the school fence. They flattened the playground equipment as the fearful children inside the school watched on. Then the soldiers spread through the town. Everyone was brought before the General in the schoolyard. He told the people, "You are my people now." No one spoke. Then suddenly someone threw a small, battered thong from the school building. It hit the General in the head. He ordered his soldiers to find the child who had only one thong. The soldiers discovered a huge pile of thongs in the school. All the students and teachers had nothing on their feet! The General left shame-faced and defeated, the laughingstock of the villagers and his soldiers. Rebel is based on a true story that occurred in Rangoon. It powerfully reveals that tyranny can be opposed by seemingly insignificant people. Young readers will be challenged by the courage of the unknown rebel.

Peace Crane

Written and illustrated by Sheila Hamanaka
New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1995 ISBN 0-688-13815-2 40 pp Historical fiction picture book for Grade 3 and older.

An American girl imagines that when Hiroshima was bombed, the Peace Crane flew toward heaven with a quarter million souls soaring behind it. She thinks about Sadako, a 10-year-old girl who became ill with leukemia eight years after the bombing. Because in Japan the crane is a symbol of long life, Sadako folded more than a thousand cranes in hopes of health and peace. But Sadako died.

The American girl wonders if the Peace Crane is still flying and crying over her neighborhood where shooting is heard in the streets. The Peace Crane comes to her in a dream, revealing beauty on the earth. The girl begins to see the presence of the Peace Crane in her own life when she hears her neighbor's music and songs of peace. Peace Crane is a sensitive book about the longings of children everywhere for a safe world. With the supervision of a teacher or parent, this book can serve as a discussion starter about children's fears for the future and about how Jesus is our only source of peace.

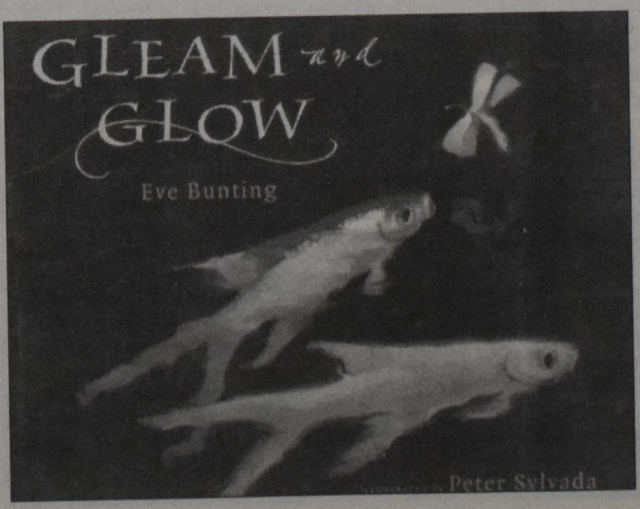


Gleam and Glow

Written by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Peter Sylvada
New York: Harcourt, 2001 ISBN 0-15-202596-0 32 pp Historical fiction picture book for Grade 1 and older.

Soon after Papa left home to join the Liberation Army, a passerby gives eight-year-old Viktor and his family two fish in a glass bowl. Viktor's sister Marina names the fish Gleam and Glow. Despite Marina's protests, Mama doesn't allow her to take the fish along when they flee from the enemy to a safe land. Before they leave, Viktor slips the fish into a nearby pond. He wonders whether his family will ever return home and, if not, whether Papa will find them.

After many days they arrive at a refugee camp where they are eventually reunited with Papa. When they finally return home, war's devastation is painfully evident. Though their house has been destroyed, the pond is filled with countless fish. Viktor understands that the fish survived just as he and his family had. Inspired by real events in a village in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bunting's story captures the refugee experience and shows that hope can be discovered in unexpected places.



Pink and Say

Written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco
New York: Philomel Books, 1994 ISBN 0-399-22671-0 48 pp Historical picture book for Grade 3 and older.

In this American Civil War story passed down through several generations of her family, Patricia Polacco tells how wounded

Continued on page 11...

Humor/Review

A snowman called Snoopy

Ron deBoer

I love the first snowfall of the year, especially when it comes unrepentantly early, and you've just begun thinking about draining the lawnmower for the winter.

The air is usually a bit mild so the snow sticks to tree branches and makes little hats on fence-posts. Everything looks as if it has been carefully foamed by some cosmic spray can. You wake up and the world has transformed into a winter wonderland overnight. On mornings like this, the kids and I take a long look out the window then a not-so-long look at each other. A smile curls the edges of our mouths and Karen knows all too well what that smile means. "Boots are behind the furnace, snow pants are on the hooks behind the door and the mitts are in the mitts drawer." She barely looks up from her *Canadian Living* magazine with the wreath-making tips on the cover.

The four- and eight-year-old struggle into their snow suits, snap their coat buttons up, press down their Velcro flaps, tie their boots, pull on their hoods and just before reaching for the knob to the front door…announce they have to go pee.

Unzip, unrip, unflap

Unzip, unrip, unflap, unsnap — they climb out, do their business, then return to the launching pad to put on their space suits again. I don't care. Today, I am as patient as Doug, my neighbor, who has already methodically scraped off every bit of snow from his driveway and sidewalk. Today, we're going to roll the best snowman ever!

"Snow*woman*," the eight-year-old corrects.

The teenage and almost-teenage queens sit on the couch, sniffing at our childishness. They are flipping through old newspapers for the NBA standings, pretending not to notice the snow. To them, "snow is soooo last year." They'd rather download the latest Avril Levigne hit single from MP3.com than get their new flared hip-huggers wet.

Fine by us.

First we test the snow. "Oh, it's good and packy," says the eight-year-old, molding a snowball in her little purple hands. The backyard is like paradise. The ground is perfectly pristine, like a sheet of blank paper waiting to be drawn upon. Toques of snow sit on riding toys left in the yard and even the clothesline has a perfect little line of snow from one end to the other. The four-year-old shovels her hand under the snow and immediately tastes it.

"How do you know a dog didn't pee there?" the eight-year-old says.

But the four-year-old doesn't care. The sins of a wandering mutt couldn't taint this Garden of Eden.

A heavenly host of angels

Every year, the act of making our snowman starts out the same. We all begin rolling a ball around the yard, but after a couple of minutes, the little ones are off tasting the snow again or laying on their backs and flapping their arms and legs, creating a heavenly host of angels all around the yard.

I pack a snowball good and hard and roll it with a steady hand. Little green pathways of grass begin appearing all over the yard, intersecting with one another. When the bottom ball of the snowman is finished, we pick out all the leaves and twigs and pat it down smoothly.

Snowball number two is started using the same process. Pack a small ball, roll it around evenly, pack it firmly, roll it around some more then carry it over to snowball number one. Here is where the creation of our being begins to get exciting. I drop snowball number

HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN

two onto snowball number one and, again, we pick off the leaves and small branches. We rub it gently all around, shaping it into the roundness called for by snowmen since the beginning of time.

Then comes the head. The head has to be special. Nobody looks at the lower two snowballs; it's all about the head. It's got to be packed hard and made round. The head can't appear to be merely a growth out of the snowman's torso-shoulder-snowball. By now, I've completely taken over the process of creating our snowman. I get kitchen utensils and sculpt the forehead and jaw line. The four year old has been holding out two big red buttons to be used for eyes but the sockets aren't ready yet. And you can't just stab a carrot into the middle of its face, either. You need to mold the cheekbones and nose area so that it looks acceptable. We are creating the first snowman here!

The eight-year-old winds a scarf around our snowman and then drops an old gray fedora on top of his head. Karen tosses us a corn pipe she has dug up from the toy box and our snowman is complete. "His face looks evil," Karen says from the front door. "The neighborhood kids will be scared of him."

"*Her*!" says the eight-year-old.

Just then the 11- and 13-year-old come bounding out of the house. They glance at my snowman and sniff. "Nice snowman, Dad." They don't attempt to stifle their laughter.

"I like him," says the four-year-old. "Let's call him Snoopy."

Before I can answer, I get a snowball in the neck. The pre-teen and teen queens have packed an arsenal of snowballs behind the van and are launching them over the roof racks at us.

Sin has entered the garden.

One hits Snoopy on the hat and threatens to knock off his head. I dive toward my creation and pack his neck stronger.

The pre-teen and teen might be cool, but they're not very bright. I pack three snowballs and make my way around the van. After dodging a flurry of wild throws by the queens, I launch a snowball high above their heads. While they stand gazing heavenward at it, I whip both snowballs shoulder high and hit both of them just below the face.

Threatening to destroy Snoopy

Now they're mad at me and threaten to destroy Snoopy. The eight-year-old stands guard while the four-year-old goes to get Mom. I am cowering behind the wilting yellow chrysanthemum plant.

Just then a voice calls from above. "Ron, why are you hiding?" Karen is leaning out an upstairs window. I point to the snow-terrorists.

Then she announces hot chocolate and fresh donuts will be served in five minutes. We quickly declare peace and agree to break bread together at the kitchen table. The 11-year-old, giving in to temptation, throws one last snow ball at Snoopy before slamming the door behind her.

When the teen queens and little ones have disappeared through the front door, I take a closer look at my new protégé. He is kind of ugly. His head sort of melts into his shoulders, he has an elongated forehead that makes him Neanderthal-like and he slouches. Perhaps I had created him in my own image! I shape his cheeks and forehead for a few more minutes. Why did it matter to me what the snowman or woman or creature looked like? My neighbor, Lou-Anne, drives by slowly, a puzzled look on her face. It being report card time and she being the wife of a teacher, the expression on her face says, "Have you cracked?" She rolls down her window and gives me the thumbs up sign, as if I am a very emotionally fragile person.

The perfect snowperson

If I could have created the perfect snowperson I would have. But it never comes out perfect, does it? — not the way snowpersons look on Christmas cards and December calendars, anyway. The same can be said about the perfect-looking humans we see on television and in advertising. We don't often see them in our offices or classrooms or mirrors.

I try to imagine what God must have been thinking when he created man and woman. We, of course, don't see God's people-making process. I imagine he must have looked at an elephant and perhaps a lion and thought, "I've got to make something unique." So he rolled some thoughts around then molded this tall, bare-skinned creature with thumbs and eyebrows. We're not sure whether he had to think about how many ears or which side the nostrils should go on or whether or not to include protective thumbnails for the invention of the hammer sometime down the road. We simply see the end product. (I can't help but think he first practiced on man then really got it perfect with woman.)

When he finished, he stood back and said "it's good." And we were — perfect beings made in God's own image. That Garden was perfect and man and woman were perfect. But then we fell and we now have bodies that go gray, slouch, sag and shrivel.

I've probably built 40 snowmen in my lifetime and I still can't get it right. Snoopy is testament to that. God had one shot at creating us and he did it perfectly. We, of course, have never seen man and woman in perfect forms because of sin. We will. When Jesus comes back and gives us new bodies.

Kids and war

... continued from page 10

Sheldon is rescued by Pink. Sheldon has never seen a person like Pink close up before – one with skin "the color of polished mahogany." But despite the differences in their skin color, both teenaged boys sport Union colors. Against great odds, Pink returns to his home in Confederate territory and his mother nurses Sheldon back to health. As Sheldon (nicknamed Say) recuperates, he begins to understand the barriers faced by colored soldiers, the devastating consequences of slavery, and how the ability to read frees the human spirit. When marauders attack, Pink's mother is killed. After burying her, the boys begin the journey back to the Union troops. Along the way they are captured by the Confederate Army, then separated. Say survives imprisonment, but Pink is hanged within hours. Though Polacco's tale portrays war's brutality, it also applauds what people hold in common – a shared humanity.

Other Books:

The Roses in My Carpets **by Rukhsana**

The Butter Battle Book **by Dr. Seuss**

Hiroshima No Pika **by Toshi Maruki**

Faithful Elephants: A True Story of Animals, People and War **by Yukio Tsuchiya**

Hilde and Eli: Children of the Holocaust **by David A. Adler**

Opinion

The century of my father; the century of my grandchildren

Bert Hielema

I attended my first political meeting with my father at the tender age of 12, in the summer of 1940 when Dr. Hendrik Colijn, political leader of the The Anti-Revolutionary Party, spoke at the Be Quick Football Stadium in the city of Groningen. Thousands of staunch party members plus, I am sure, a few Nazi sympathizers and Sicherheit Dienst (Secret Service) agents, were also present when this Christian leader told his devoted followers to submit to the yoke of the Germans, declaring it the legitimate rulers of the land. Then and there he lost his credibility.

I was reminded of this incident reading Geert Mak's book: *De Eeuw van mijn vader*, [The Century of my father] My dad was born in 1898, a year before Geert Mak's father, Catrinus, whose life story is related in that book. My father too was a real '*mannenbroeder*,' president of the local political action group in Groningen, a member of the Christian School board, and of the church council for ever and ever — typical of his generation, not an evening at home during the week.

I have often speculated how my faith would have developed had I stayed in the Netherlands: of my eight siblings, seven of them in the Netherlands, only two, the oldest, have remained members of my parental church, the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk. Most of their children have left the faith, as far as I can tell. My sister just above me — I am number four of nine — has been a member of different churches, while the younger ones, except for one, have none or a very casual contact with any religion.

CHRISTIAN COURIER FILES

Is the Dutch church fading into the background? Hielema writes: "There is no hard and fast answer to the rise and fall of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands."

A thinking, questioning, Christian

At any rate, I am glad that I came to Canada and have experienced the transition from a '*mannenbroeder*' commitment, to a thinking, questioning, occasionally doubting, Christian. The term '*mannenbroeder*' is used by both Kam and Agnes Amelink in her more recent book, *De Gereformeerden* [The Reformed], which deals exclusively with the church from which most Dutch Canadian immigrants originate — the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Many of these immigrants took with them that Dutch and Reformed mentality: busy in the kingdom, in church councils, in Christian school boards, activism at the expense of piety, perhaps.

True to my tradition, I too was a hyper-active participant in the kingdom: as a young father for six years a secretary of the local school board, member of the education committee, as well as both recording and corresponding secretary of the board of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools, which meant one or two days each month meeting in Toronto, plus a day or two of home work after. I was the first chair of the Beacon Christian High School in St. Catharines and member of the church council. Indeed a real '*mannenbroeder*,' taking on commitments without involving my wife in my decisions, something I certainly would not do now.

'The mystery of the 20th Century'

In her book Agnes Amelink, a member of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, quotes Geert Mak: "When *De eeuw van mijn vader* by Geert Mak appeared, the reviewer of *Nederlands Dagblad* called the fast demise of the Reformed subculture 'the mystery of the 20th Century,' just as the emergence of the reformed people equally was 'the miracle of the 19th century' according to Hendrik Algra, Mak's history teacher."

There is no hard and fast answer to the rise and fall of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. Amelink, a reporter with *Trouw*, a national Christian daily, admits that she has not solved the mystery of this decline with the writing of this book.

The trap of power

She cites two possibilities, one being the trap of power. Before World War II the Christian Party had been in government almost continuously. "If they — the Reformed people — had learned from studying church history they should have known that secular power in the long run is deadly for life of the spirit. Power corrupts and breeds self-satisfaction."

Further: "Faith for many Reformed people was a question of a zealous participation in church and Christian organizations. They called that 'laboring in God's kingdom.' When these goals were reached, I suppose the zeal waned and commitment collapsed.

She also mentioned a result of its decline: "What, in any case, has changed forever, is the place the Bible occupies in everyday life. This is a symptom evident across the entire Reformed Church spectrum. Bible knowledge has almost entirely disappeared and it doesn't seem likely that this will ever change again. The tube now has all the attention." It reminds me of Malcolm Muggeridge's statement that television is more dangerous than the atom bomb.

Insulated and isolated existence

We, in Canada, have lived a rather insulated and isolated existence, especially in the decades following the immigration waves of the early 1950's. Financial restraints, combined with our ghetto-like life, centring on church, school, family, shielded us from 'secular' influences. Essentially we transplanted that Dutch pre-war zeal into Canadian soil and carefully nurtured it there. Had we all stayed in Holland, we would have gone along too. So, allow me to try another angle.

Geert Mak, in his final pages, quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "It — the development in the Reformed Churches — went as the great theologian and resistance fighter Dietrich Bonhoeffer had predicted in 1945, just before his execution. '*The churches had fought so many years for their self preservation as institute that they were no longer capable to bring the message of redemption and salvation to the people. The time that you could say all things to people with words — theological or pious — ... in short, the time of (that kind of) religion is past*.' He — Bonhoeffer — expected that eventually a language would be found expressing a new justice and truth, a language that heralds peace between God and the people and the approach of his Kingdom. But for the time being, he thought, the Europeans would experience a time without any religion. Our existence as Christians will, in this period, be composed of two elements: prayer and good works among humanity." (The quotes in italics are from Bonhoeffer's *Widerstand und Ergebung*, cited by Mak.)

The church has had its day

I think that Mak is correct here. The church, as an institution has had its day in the Western world. Bonhoeffer developed the idea of 'maturity', the notion that humans must live in the world, self-subsisting, as they would if there were no God: "So our coming of age leads us to true recognition before God. God would have us know that we must live as men who manage our lives without him" (*Letters from Prison*).

I think that both in biblical terms and in contemporary ways, the two go together: we live in an age where God's face is hidden while we struggle to assert our responsibility. Don't get me wrong. Even though God's face is hidden, a concept which often appears in the Bible, Jesus and his Spirit is still with us. Jesus was the "first-born of creation" (Col.1-15-20). We are modeled after him. Not Adam, but Jesus was the first human being. God wants us to become fully human, as Jesus was.

If we use the church as the crutch to keep us spiritually alive, the church may have to go. God in his wisdom wants us to assert ourselves as full men and women.

After all, the church and the Bible will disappear in the new creation (Rev. 21:22 : I did not see a temple in the city.), so Mak may have something there. We may even have to do without formal religion.

Oops. Is my conclusion right here? Will I stop going to church? I won't, even though I often feel like giving it the boot. Of all the church gatherings, I find the weekly prayer meeting at 9 a.m. on Thursdays, the most relevant and the most liberating. There we laugh, cry and pray.

Of course denominations and church buildings will not disappear. They may even flourish, just as temple worship in Jesus' days was popular. Yet it took only 40 years for Jerusalem and the temple to be destroyed once Christianity had a foothold, starting as simple house-churches. Jesus pointed out to the Samaritan woman that not church or temple worship is the essence but to worship the Father-Creator in Spirit and truth.

The legacy of the development of "the hidden face of God" is an age of insecurity, moral ambiguity, and spiritual lack. God is testing us, telling us that if we want to be ready for adoption as sisters and brothers of Christ, as inheritors of his kingdom, inhabitants in the new creation, then we cannot remain children any longer.

Times of untold suspense

We live in times of untold suspense. On the one hand we are possibly on the threshold of planetary catastrophes. On the other hand we are on the verge of never-before-imagined possibilities, such as human cloning and planetary explorations, bordering on the divine. We are in a race between discovery and destruction. Stephen Hawking in his *Brief History of Time* says: "I think that there is a good chance that the study of the early universe and the requirements of mathematical consistency will lead us to a complete unified theory within the lifetime of some of us who are around today, always presuming we don't blow ourselves up first."

All this cries for another question, even more important: What sort of Christianity will my grandchildren encounter? What is their Century going to be like? The October issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* has this topic as its main feature.

At another threshold

The author, Philip Jenkins, Professor of History and Religious Studies at Penn State, writes: "The Reformation touched everything. It altered not just the practice of religion, but also the nature of society, economics, politics, education and the law." Now 500 years later we

CHRISTIAN REFORMED WORLD MISSIONS

A Christian in Sierra Leone. "Christianity is not only surviving in the Global South, it is enjoying a radical revival, a return to Scriptural roots," writes Hielema.

are at another threshold, "a moment as epochal as the Reformation itself....the 21st Century... will be a century in which religion replaced ideology as the prime animating and destructive force in human affairs." However, where the 'old' Christianity wants liberation, full female participation, freedom for same sex couples, the 'new' wing, in the new world, Africa, Asia, South America, wants to restore primitive Christianity, preaching "deep personal faith, communal orthodoxy, mysticism, and puritanism, all founded on obedience to spiritual authority."

Nevertheless, sectarianism is rampant. The Brazilian-based Universal Church of the Kingdom of God claims to offer strong prayer to destroy witchcraft, demon possession, bad luck and promises that members will gain prosperity and financial breakthrough. Other church groups, however, provide health, welfare and education.

Says Jenkins: "This sort of alternative social system, which played an enormous role in the earliest days of Christianity, has been a potent means of winning mass support for the most committed religious groups and is likely to grow.... Being a member of an active Christian church today may well bring more tangible benefits than being a mere citizen of Nigeria or Peru.... Today African churches stand or fall by their success in healing.... Southern Christians are reading the New Testament and taking it very seriously.... The blind receive sight, the lame walk."

In a region where Christian vie with Islam for power or where Hindus resent their advances, religious tensions make a volatile situation worse. Fighting for their God or Allah is a proven way of siphoning off internal tensions. This applies also, suggests Jenkins, to Christians with a strongly apocalyptic mindset, where "triumph of righteousness is associated with a vision of a world devastated by fire and plague."

The *Atlantic* article concludes that Christianity is not only surviving in the Global South, it is enjoying a radical revival, a return to Scriptural roots. "The most significant transformation of Christianity in the world today is not the liberal Reformation that is so much desired in the North. It is the Counter-Reformation coming from the global South. And it's very likely that in a decade or two neither component of global Christianity will recognize its counterpart as fully or authentically Christian."

A desire to return to fundamentalism

In the Netherlands the more alive churches are like their Canadian and American counterparts, a dualistic evangelical kind, separating religion from daily life. It seems that there is a desire to return to fundamentalism, certainly in the new churches, evident in simplistic views on creation and the secondary role of women, in short, more sloganeering than biblical wisdom and liberty. A trend towards legalism and rules, which, no doubt makes life easier.

Yet, at its core Christianity is the religion of shalom, of broadmindedness, of tolerance, of humility, because we, all of us, see matters out of focus. The essential message still is peace on earth, peace for people, for trees, for animals, for all of God's creation. The century of my grandchildren, all eleven of them, looks more like the opposite. Although at this moment we are at the zenith of comfort, all made possible by Arab oil, we also are threatened by the environmental fall-out from this devilish stuff.

We have Jesus' promise that he will not abandon his people, but also that disturbing item that, had the time of testing not been shortened (Matthew 24:22) no one would survive. That points to the virtual disappearance of the church. So, some tentative thoughts. I may be entirely off-base and am open to change my mind through an amicable dialogue.

Editor's Note:

I publish this rather rambling article by our faithful columnist Bert Hielema with some misgivings. Although it provides little in the way of constructive direction; yet, at the end of 2002, it does provide matter for reflection and discussion.

Are there lessons to be learned from the collapse of the Reformed "world" in the Netherlands? Does it serve any purpose to speculate on the future shape of Christianity in the West? Is Bert's pessimism about the future of the institutional church a self-fulfilling kind of prophecy? Is it consistent with his stress on holism? Is his revival of a theme from the '70s — a mature, religionless Christianity — helpful, or was it one of the things that hastened the demise of the church? What sort of challenge does Christianity in Africa and South America pose for Christianity in the Reformed tradition? Have we no wisdom to pass on to Christians elsewhere or to future generations?

These are a few of the important questions raised by Bert's article.

The editor

Persecution of Chinese Christians continues

CHINA (Compass) — Reports from many parts of China speak of arbitrary arrests and imprisonment of unregistered Christians. "The police poured boiling water over one evangelist in north China recently," reported one house church elder. According to an underground magazine, five rural Christians were arrested near Yongzhou City, Hunan province and one was tortured into confessing that his church was a cult. He was sentenced to 18 months "re-education through labor." According to the same magazine, 28 young Christian workers from the provinces of Hunan, Jiangxi and Henan were arrested while conducting Bible training classes in Jiahe City. The police demanded $240 from each person and detained 10 of the believers in prison. In late May, one hundred house church leaders were reportedly arrested in the Fangcheng district of Henan, an area known for Christian revival. Informants had apparently alerted authorities that the leaders were involved in a Bible training camp.

Muslim extremists pressure Christians

NIGERIA (Compass) — Leaders of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in southwest Nigeria have denounced incessant attacks by Muslim extremists on the churches in the area. "The clergy and Christians in Ikota Estate area are increasingly under harassment and terrorism by Muslim fanatics.

They have put the churches under taxation," Rev. Henry Ogbuechi, CAN area chairman, told newsmen. Harassment surfaced in the nearby state of Ondo when Muslim fundamentalists invaded the Adeyemi College of Education to protest the expulsion of four Muslim students who insisted on wearing veils on campus, a practice prohibited to guard against cheating on examinations.

Protestors abducted the college provost, Dr. Rueben Adeboyeje, a Christian. In another incident, Muslim leaders in the city of Sokoto have demanded that a Christian church built by Nigerian policemen in their barracks be demolished. Assistant Inspector General of Police Mike Okuo, a Christian, insists that the church building will remain, pointing out that Muslim policemen have built a mosque in the barracks.

Why go to church? 10

To come to the light

A. A. van Ruler

One reason we go to church is to be enlightened, not just our spirits but our entire existence, even the totality of our dark reality.

The word "enlighten" can be taken in a simple, superficial sense. We still live in the wake of the so-called Enlightenment, the spiritual movement that began about 1650 in Europe and that reached its climax in the French Revolution, but which continues to exercise a strong influence today. Its fundamental idea was this: man must attempt to understand everything that is and that happens in the world with his reason. He must discover the laws or ideas in them. Then all superstition will vanish and all myths be swept aside. Everything will gradually become transparent and clear.

A powerful counter-movement to the Enlightenment has since discovered the power of the unconscious and of social forces in the historical process. We have also discovered that we cannot grasp things in the concepts of our understanding but that we must rather grasp them in their essence. Above all, we have discovered human existence as an existence that can never be fully captured in thought but only lived in freedom.

End to the Enlightenment

These and other discoveries are bringing an end to the period of the Enlightenment. But it would be a mistake to suppose that this also eliminates the basic idea of enlightenment. It is much too attractive to do away with altogether. That's why it assumed such a dominant role in modern science and technology. The longing for the light of reason is too powerful in the human heart to be forgotten so easily.

In any case, over the last three centuries the church and its worship have been strongly influenced by this movement, especially in Protestantism. This is why the sermon became so surprisingly important. Although already important before the Reformation, during the Reformation it became central as the proclamation of the gospel, that is, as the mediation of salvation. It was, to be sure, never the intention of the Reformers to let the liturgy wither to little more than decoration for the sermon. But the years of the Enlightenment wrought changes.

Gradually people began to go to church to be enlightened, to gain clear insight, to learn how things are, to receive true ideas. The sermon became more and more a lecture. At the furthest extreme, a worship service became like taking a course.

The church's enlightening function

Admittedly, the church has always had some such enlightening function and task. It is one of the many facets of the church's cultural significance and leadership. There is also a catechetical side to preaching; it is also instruction in true doctrine.

But when the sermon is reduced to instruction and the liturgy to the sermon, this is a complete distortion of worship. We must also remember that in the last hundred years the church has encountered enormously powerful competition in enlightening the people. Think of the schools, free organizations in all areas of life and of the powerful media.

What is man?

It isn't possible to completely write off the church in this task of enlightenment in this sense of the word, for the fundamental questions always remain, even if these only pertain to our view of man. At a certain moment everything can hinge on the simple question: what is man? The church would be neglecting its task if it did not continue to answer this question on the basis of the Bible. And when the question about the ultimate nature of reality is raised, it must continue to put forward the biblical answer that it is God's creation.

So we can continue to go to church to be enlightened in this simple sense of the word.

But the word "enlighten' can also be taken in a much deeper sense, in the sense that the early church understood it when she saw baptism as the sacrament of enlightenment and invited people to come to church with the words, "Come to the light!" This has been the great claim of the church from the beginning: that in her the light shines and that in itself the world round about is darkness. It is the light of revelation that shines in the church. Christianity has always been firmly convinced that God, the ground of all being, has fully revealed himself in Israel and in Jesus Christ and that this revelation is carried on in the church through the Holy Spirit. We can also say, this light is the light of eternal life that shines on through the darkness of death. It is the light of God himself.

As I see it, it is best to attach this realization to that element in the liturgy called the reading of Scripture. No matter how it is structured, this happens in every Christian worship service. This Scripture reading should be experienced on its own, not just as part of the sermon. The latter in turn should be associated as closely as possible with a specific text from Scripture. The text should be the fountain from which all the water of the sermon gushes up.

DETAIL OF REMBRANDT'S *PORTRAIT OF CORNELIS CLAESZOON ANSLO AND A WOMAN* (1641)

The light that blazes up out of Scripture is the shimmering light of joy.

Let the entire text speak

This is no longer how it's done, I know. Preachers flit like butterflies from one flower to another to gather a little nectar here, there and everywhere. This is dangerous. A sermon should concentrate on letting the entire text speak, and the preacher should resist the temptation to say something that does not arise from the text. Scripture should not be turned into a book full of all sorts of mysterious interconnections. The Bible is a relatively simple, sober and unsophisticated book.

But the sermon is one thing, and Scripture reading another. It makes no difference whether this reading moves sequentially through Scripture from one Sunday to the next (the *lectio continua*) or whether it includes reading from two or three parts of Scripture (the Old Testament, the Epistles, the Gospels).

At issue is the reading of Scripture as such. It must give us pause. It is just as strange as all the other things that happen in a worship service. We read from an enormously ancient book: the newest section is about 1,900 years old and the oldest at least 3,000. It is also a double book: the Old Testament and the New Testament, and no one can say exactly how the two are related. And it is an Israelitic book. What is it to us moderns? Isn't it an anachronism, an outdated practice?

Why do we do it? The presupposition behind this strange practice is this: Scripture reading fills our space — of the church and of the world – with the brilliant light of eternal truth, with the light of the Word of God which illuminates everything.

Eternal light radiates from Bible

We could also read from the Edda, the Quran, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the writings of Confucius or of Mao Tse Tung. But the Christian church is stuck on the Bible. She even calls it Holy Scripture, God's Word. This is where the eternal light radiates from, and this light is contained in the body of Christ. The church is a cathedral filled with light. Saved by this light, the church has from the beginning seen itself as a beacon of light in a dark world. Did this come from Christians? From Christ? From the Holy Spirit? From the liturgy? From the Holy Scriptures? Whatever the case, she calls, "Come to the light!" A church that no longer calls in this way has become salt without savor. Without this outrageous claim, she loses all power and significance.

Why must we go to church for this enlightenment?

All mysteries are brought to light

First, because there all mysteries are brought to light. I really do mean all mysteries – that of being, of the cosmos, of human nature, of evil, of salvation, of God. They are not solved in the sense that they are no longer mysteries. That's what the Enlightenment tried to do; it saw them no longer as mysteries but as problems to be solved. Christianity never thought of the real mysteries in these terms; it was more reverent in its approach. But she did feel that they were brought to light by the light that shines from revelation, and were irradiated and suffused by it.

So it is a genuine enlightenment but in a higher sense of the word. It far exceeds the light of our understanding and of our reason (darkened by sin). If we wish to speak of reason in this connection, then we must speak of divine reason, the Logos, the Word. It passes through heights and depths, through all of created reality. It includes the mystery of evil. It is the reason of the cross, of Christ's sacrifice and death. It triumphs only in his resurrection.

But this awesomely deep and high divine reason is genuine reason. By means of revelation, it can also irradiate our reason. And then our reason, too, becomes enlightened. Then we see everything in our lives and in the world with the enlightened eyes of understanding and with a heart illuminated by divine light. At first we see only a small light glinting here and there, but gradually the light grows. It looks as if it is rising up from below in waves, even from the depths of hell. Before we know it, we're standing in the middle of this divine light.

Seized by rapture

Here we are doing what everyone nowadays condemns – engaging in theological speculation. We are looking through to the ground of everything, to the very first and the very last questions, to the origin and to the end, and we long passionately to behold the inner harmony of all God's doings. Anyone who catches even the slightest glimpse of that harmony is seized by rapture.

Theology, it is true, is not a function of the church. It is a science or perhaps also an art, and it really belongs in the university. But without the church, without the light of revelation that shines in and out of the church, theology is not possible. One cannot do theology properly unless one is a member of the church and attends regularly.

This enlightenment, however, goes much deeper than to this divine reason which also irradiates human reason. The light of revelation pierces to the depths of the heart, of human existence and of the totality of being. In those depths there is a darkness that differs from rational incomprehensibility and the unfathomableness of things: there is the darkness of melancholy or depression. We can be very hard on ourselves, spurning all consolation. Our very existence

can become a burden. This melancholy can swing into despair, and some, in a moment of desperation, commit violence against themselves.

A bitter and sweet poison

Strangely, a person sometimes even secretly enjoys this melancholy. It may be a poison, but it is a poison that is bitter and sweet at the same time. So it may cause him genuine suffering and even destroy him, but at the same time he may enjoy it. Willingly or no, he digs himself ever deeper into the pit.

This is, of course, first of all something in the heart, a sediment that has settled on the bottom of the heart, that turns vaporous and gradually fills the entire cavity of the heart. But it doesn't remain confined there. From there it permeates the whole of ones existence, filling even the most remote corners with this darkness of spirit. And when we experience our own selves in this way, can we experience the cosmos any differently? All of being as such is flooded with despair. And sometimes a person can come to the conclusion that not-being might be better than being.

But the light of revelation can penetrate even into this darkness, no matter how deep or how dense. When we open Scripture, every page declares: This reality is the handiwork of God, it is a product of his creation, redemption and glorification. This light that blazes up out of Scripture is the shimmering light of joy. We learn that God, too, descends into very deep valleys, even into the darkness of guilt and the sacrifice of atonement. But he makes it, and through it all he is faithful to his creation and he is unspeakably good.

The light of joy drives away the darkness of depression. It is an enlightenment of a very different kind than the enlightenment by God's reason. Here we participate not just in God's rationality but also in God's joy in all things. We are led into God's wine cellar and we become drunk with joy. His light irradiates the whole of being, fills the entire cosmos, permeates all of existence and lights up all of the heart. What do we discover when we are led into the totality of all things lit by the light of revelation? Pure joy!

But even this doesn't take us all the way. We can go even deeper. This light of revelation by which we are enlightened is completely existential, that is, it is a reality in and of itself.

There is the darkness of evil and wickedness, the power of sin, of idols and demons, of heathendom. Whatever one calls it, it is something monstrous — this evil that resides in the will and that wills evil, or at least not just the good. Human existence is riven by it. Augustine opened the eyes of the church to this element, and since then Christianity has spoken of the "total depravity" of human nature. This has nothing to do with pessimism; it is the highest realism. With eyes wide open we see how deeply lost all reality is. It is also the highest humanism, for it locates the seat and source of evil in the human will.

We must admit that this darkness, the darkness of evil, is the deepest and most dense. We might even suspect that the darkness of depression and despair are born here. Can we go a step farther and say that the world is rationally incomprehensible and unfathomable because of this evil lodged in the human will?

Whatever the case, this deepest darkness is also driven away by the light of revelation. This was Israel's definitive experience: We received the law of God and it is the light of the good. This was also the definitive experience of the early church: we have received the Spirit and thereby not just the light but also the attraction and the power of the good. Plato said that the idea of the good is the highest idea. Revelation tells us that the good is more than an idea; it became a reality on earth. We can now live in it. We need no longer wander in the darkness of evil; we may now walk in the light of goodness.

It is the light of God's holiness, of the holiness of life and of every single thing, even the most trivial. The holiness of all things is the beauty, the lustre of it all. The enlightenment in which we take part through revelation gives all things a rich lustre. We may even boast of it, says Paul. To boast in this sense is to show off the full and brilliant lustre of all things like the peacock spreading the beauty of its feathers to the sunlight.

Threefold enlightenment

This threefold enlightenment is no simple matter. It doesn't happen by itself. It is bound up with conversion. We must turn away from the darkness, from the darkness of the unfathomable and from the darkness of despair and from the darkness of wickedness. We must turn away from the darkness and step into the light. We do that when we go to church. We go to church to turn away from all forms of darkness and to enter into the cathedral filled with the light of truth, joy and beauty.

This is quite a process. It begins with being called to conversion by God. This call is a work of the Spirit, but it can also penetrate to the innermost part of a person. What was external becomes internal. Being converted by the Spirit becomes letting oneself be converted and even converting oneself. What we notice of the work of the Spirit in our hearts is that we turn away from the darkness and turn toward the light to walk in it.

There is something current and momentary about this. One may be converted violently, be suddenly seized from outside. Suddenly he finds himself standing in the light. Something similar happens to us every Sunday morning in the worship service when Scripture is read.

But there is also something continuing and permanent about conversion; it stretches out over the full extent of our lives. To overstate it a bit: a person's whole life is a turning away from darkness and a turning to the light. We haven't suddenly arrived. Who is there who has seen the light of truth in all its fullness? Who is there who fully rejoices in a joy without shadow? Who is there who lives in pure holiness?

Just as in conversion, being converted (by the Spirit) turns into converting oneself, so in enlightenment something similar happens. Enlightenment is a being enlightened by the light of revelation, but gradually it also takes on the nature of meditation, reflecting on things. We allow what is read to us from Scripture sink in. We become like Mary, who stored up all these things and pondered them in her heart. Such pondering is a wondrous activity; having hidden these things, we take them out again, and turn them over this way and that. Each time the light falls on them in a different way and they take on a different glow.

This, too, is part of the worship service. We sit quietly to run these things by us once again and reflect on them. It is about the fundamental things. They tell me about myself, about my eternal salvation, about the ultimate destination of everything and thus about the essence of everything. That's what we mull over in church.

This meditative stillness in church is an awesomely beautiful thing. It is filled with light, with light that I may take as my own. By it I am wholly comforted, not just for myself but for all things. It is to my spirit like the early sunshine on a summer morning.

This meditation leads to confession. The stillness is broken as I speak out what has moved me – the truth about myself and all reality as it has come to me from Scripture. And by confessing I, too, become a source of light that shines in the world.

Resolving regrets will bring a happier New Year!

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

"If only…If only…If only…" mutters Jonathan as he returns again and again to the same thoughts and incidents he has been ruminating about during the last few months. "I can't understand what made me do it," he further laments. "Someone should have pointed me in the right direction!"

How many of us can identify with Jonathan's frustrated attempt at trying to understand why he did what he did — especially at the end of another year? How many of us wish we could do some things over again? How many of us feel bitter towards ourselves, others and God for the mistakes we have made on the road of life?

All of us have regrets. They become a problem when we can't talk about them or we ruminate like Jonathan. Regrets need to be acknowledged and grieved like any other disappointments in life.

Acknowledging regrets

Regrets take many forms. We regret how we have treated others. We regret missed opportunities. We regret reacting to old angers at the expense of our loved ones. We regret not appreciating the time we had with our children as they were growing up. We regret being preoccupied with unimportant things as our parents' age. We regret the marital conflicts we fueled as we were trying to alleviate pain of old, unmet needs.

Most of us get angry when our loved ones bring up painful incidents from the past. We don't want to go there. And so, we stay stuck not realizing we are missing out on getting to know ourselves better.

Honest insights

Many parents have regrets about how they raised their children. And yes, we need to grieve the mistakes we made. We do not have to beat ourselves up, but it is helpful to know where we were coming from when we were parenting. What did we know about raising children? What did we know about their emotional and social development? What did we know about their vulnerabilities? And what would we have done if we had known what we know now?

Hindsight is often a harsh teacher. Honest insight, on the other hand, can give us an understanding into what we did right and make amends for what we did not do well. Honest insight will also encourage us to approach our children and resolve our unfinished business with them in a way that is healing for them as well as ourselves.

A communal struggle

Staying stuck in regret is a defence against deeper feelings of inadequacy. In a society where confidence and success is the measure of one's worth and vulnerabilities are detrimental to our "image," we forget the struggle against this deep sense of inadequacy is a *communal* one and familiar to most of us.

Facing our inadequacies is a matter of the heart. Like brokenness, it is something that cannot be taught. When we face and experience our own inadequacies in healthy ways, we move *through* the pain and make room for God to heal our wounded hearts. As a result, we become more accepting of other people as well as ourselves. We become more caring and understanding. We live more spontaneously because we no longer have to measure up. We become free. Free to be flawed, yet good enough to play a role in His Kingdom.

Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Opinion

Whither the Reformed Churches?

Ty Hofman

The Grand Rapids Press ran a short but telling article by Charles Honey, its Religion Editor, on October 5th. It was entitled: Study: RCA suffering identity crisis. He was writing about a report on the structure and identity of eight U.S. denominations in a changing culture.

Officials of the Reformed Church in America presented the report to a meeting in Western Seminary in Holland, Michigan. All eight, including the RCA, were reportedly struggling to maintain their identities in a changing culture and their congregations' increasing diversity. It said: "The more liturgical or Pentecostal denominations are adapting better to post-modern culture than those of the Calvinist tradition." The RCA "has been losing members for decades." Some study members said its "future as a denomination looks iffy."

John Luidens, is a sociology professor at Hope College. "Luidens said the RCA is held together largely by 'skeletons of denomination' such as seminaries, pastors' pension plans and missions. But churches increasingly are focused on their own activities and the number of dyed-in-the-wool RCA members is 'relatively small'."

Further, "the denomination has become less focused on mission to 'almost narcissistically looking within,' to the needs of its own congregations."

'Read it and weep'

This is the nub of the Charles Honey article. It's a matter of "read it and weep." It is not a good commentary on Calvinistic churches. Notably, the Christian Reformed Church was not included in the study. It doesn't belong to the National Council of Churches and therefore can be passed over with impunity. I'm not sure I regret that. But what if it had been included and lumped with the others? Would it have fared any better?

SYNOD 2002 PHOTO

Coffee break at last year's CRC Synod. What's the future for the Christian Reformed denomination?

Well, maybe a bit.

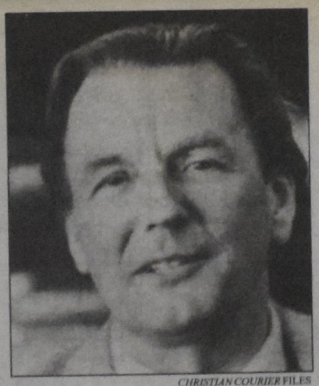
But it is not difficult to see the handwriting on the wall, especially with the growing lack of denominational loyalty and the drift, at

Continued on p. 17...

Kuitert's last farewell: a farewell to God?

Morris N. Greidanus

The ever-controversial and popular Dr. Harry M. Kuitert has written his last book. "I'm getting old," he says in an interview, "there's a time to keep your mouth shut" (*Trouw*, Oct. 4, 2002). The first printing of his *Voor een tijd een plaats van god* ("For a time a place of god") was in September 2002. Further printings have followed, the book has been in the top 10 best sellers for months, Kuitert travels across the country to speak about it, newspapers columns mention it, and friends talk about it soon enough when you visit.



CHRISTIAN COURIER FILES

Dr. Harry M. Kuitert

'god' without a capital letter

Actually one would expect a firestorm because Kuitert is not kidding when he writes "god" without a capital letter. "Human beings were there before god," he says in the preface, "god and gods are products of human imagining...." But you get the idea that people were expecting him to end up here; perhaps they are not surprised that "there is nothing left," as one said. Others find their own doubts confirmed. And there's an election in the air, much discussion of how this multicultural society can be unified around basic norms and values, so this book does not get as much attention right now. That is too bad, because there are a lot of "Christians outside-the-church" (as Huub Oosterhuis called them in his sermon at Prins Claus' funeral) who have their questions. Kuitert means to address those who have left the church, but he gives them little reason for return or faith.

Disappointed by book

So I am disappointed in this book. Kuitert's previous books have been controversial too, but they were also helpful to many in understanding the Bible and living their faith in our time. There are a lot of customs and traditions that we confuse with the faith (Dad is head of the family, so he cuts the meat, and gets the biggest slice (p.224). Even his *Het algemeen betwijfeld christelijk geloof* ("The universal doubted Christian faith") contained some valuable pastoral angles. And his "theology from below" there still had the hope of meeting S/someone from above. But as Kuitert has been clearing away the underbrush to get at the fruit (167), he has changed his mind even on the personhood of God. Did he not realize that his brush-clearing operation has cut into the fruit-bearing plant, that there is a body of belief worth preserving and protecting?

But that's the heart of this book: Kuitert does not want leave anything to faith; he wants to understand it all. People once needed these words about God to explain their world, but today we have science, technique, and technology (85). Believers would have to turn off their brains, he writes, and he does not want to live such a split life (110).

So how does Kuitert see religion and life then?

Well, "in the beginning was the Word", but that's not with a capital either. He uses the University of Toronto professor Northrop Frye's literary theories to flip Genesis: Humans tame the chaos with their words and create God with their words (183). They look for transcendence above and beyond themselves. But humans themselves are for a time a place for god (the title!), they are spirit (no caps, of course), because the power of the word is creating, it is spirit . And a person becomes and is human by being addressed by others who need him/her (from Kuitert's own summary, 184).

For a time, then, a human being is a place for god, but only "for a time"! We should not think about heaven or a resurrection. Isn't one life enough (209)? Kuitert echoes some practical advice from the literature on grieving and dying, but the best he can say about death is the CB sign off: "Over and out!" (207ff).

The *Trouw* title on the article about Kuitert was "Thirty years from shoving to upending," meaning pushing and shoving at the faith till you've crashed it. One would expect careful argumentation for such a major task, but Kuitert breezes ahead with strong declarations, no footnotes, some poems, some references to authors, but basically "I'm telling you how it is." There's a lot of anger at the church, at the Pope, at synods, and at American fundamentalists thrown in (159, 182, 166).

A bleak last book

So, a bleak last book, I think. It is amazing though, how much Kuitert uses the Bible and the hymns and psalms of the church for his illustrative material. It reminds me of a debate in the sixties between Dr. Markus Barth (son of Karl) and Dr. Fred Klooster (Calvin Seminary) on the authority of Scripture. Klooster defended a high view, Barth one a bit lower. But after the debate retired professor R. B. Kuiper came to the floor mike and, instead of trying one more argument on Dr. Barth, simply said: "I noted how much and how well you used Scripture to support your position."

Something like that is going on here too. Kuitert's references to the Bible end with 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's chapter on faith, hope, and love. The man who once wrote *Zonder geloof vaart niemand wel* ("No one fares well without faith") flattens faith into the daily courage to do your job or task. Giving love is seen as the clue to reaching the top as a human being. And hope is looking for something different and better, it transcends today. But, says Kuitert, love is the greatest because in it a human being reaches beyond self and becomes for others a place of a loving god (237).

So "faith, hope, love abide, these three," also for Dr. Harry Kuitert. For now on a fairly flat earth, but who knows? He is working with Spirit-full material, he admits to being a bit of a mystic, and he has changed his mind before. This may not be his last book after all.

Morris Greidanus is a Canadian-American living in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Opinion

... *continued from p. 16*
times almost a deliberate move, to a nascent congregationalism.

There may be those who, on the basis of a rejection of the concept of denominations, would rejoice in this development. The New Testament does not envision denominations, therefore the development of them is in some sense to be regretted. That would lead to a good and long argument about the need and value of the kind of ecclesiastical fellowship of believers which we call a denomination. But considering how fractured the Protestant church is today, could you begin to visualize how fractured the church would be if there were no denominations and the church would essentially be led by charismatic leaders with huge dreams and huge egos?

Just let's not deplore our existence as Reformed denominations until we figure out a better way to live in this world as we seek the kingdom of God. Accepting the reality of denominations, what are we to say about the potential for the self-destruction of our Reformed churches, in my case the CRC?

United in our commitment

For openers, I wish to contend that it is extremely important that the CRC be maintained as a strong, unified, self-aware and distinctly Reformed church. To realize this we will have to be united in our commitment to maintaining and strengthening what we still have as a united and confident denomination. That is not something we have at present. The CRC is suffering from the singular focus in many congregations on their own life and ministry with minimal concern for the broader body of the church. There is an incipient mega-church complex in many congregational leaders. We find many looking with longing eyes at great numbers to meet the competition from the declared congregationalists in every community. We must keep up in the race to recycle the saints. Bad motivation for a Reformed church!

Anti-denominationalism of a different stripe has left its deep scars on the CRC in the struggle for women in office, etc. That resulted in a schism on the part of the most vigorously traditional part of the church, to our deep loss. We still are suffering attrition from this tragedy though we seem not to do much about it.

Possibly the most treacherous development in the CRC is the growing lack of commitment to the essential elements that should hold us together as a church, namely the Reformed creeds, the Church Order and the decisions of Synod. There are too many leaders for whom these elements of church life are increasingly irrelevant. They will not outrightly reject these fundamentals of the denominational covenant but they surely don't lay awake nights worrying about how and where this slippage is undermining our unity.

Ultimately, this is what will issue in the demise of a relevant CRC. We could end up as just another least-common-denominator-evangelical denomination in the big swim for members. Members who can easily float from one Protestant group to another, from a CRC congregation to a flat-out dispensational mega-church that doesn't even require church membership, as long as it has your financial support and your presence to fill the pews in its multiple services.

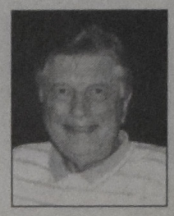
What it means to be Reformed today

The Synod of 2002 of the CRC has set forth a fine statement of what it means to be Reformed today and adopted a denominational ministries plan which endorsed it for the work of all its denominational agencies. (Acts of Synod 2002, p. 542) But Synod did not propose a way to implement this plan for the broad membership of the CRC. Nor did it identify the denominational covenant whereby the membership of the CRC should be brought to serious commitment to live as a body of believers and carry out a ministries plan.

Therefore, I have a modest proposal — that the CRC shall call forth at least two members of each of its congregations, plus its ministers, to gather in a Denominational Covenant Convention for one week, under competent leadership. Its purpose would be to ascertain what it means in practice to be a truly Reformed church today, and then to call forth a new commitment from all the churches there gathered to live faithfully in the covenant we have with each other — a covenant in which we promise to maintain our life as a truly Reformed church.

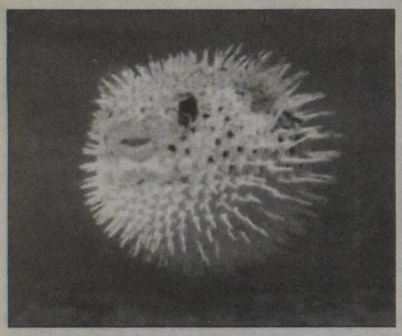
It would then be assumed that any and all persons who have no commitment to our being a Reformed church would openly and honorably seek another like-minded fellowship so that the CRC might flourish in enthusiastic commitment and unity as a Reformed fellowship of congregations.

This would go a long way to ensuring that the CRC would escape the identity crisis which is just around the corner.



Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

A new painkiller undergoing clinical trials at area hospitals



A pufferfish.

Dr. Howard Cohen

A new, powerful, non-addictive painkiller derived from the pufferfish has been given approval by the Health Protection Branch to undergo clinical trials across multiple centres in Canada. The drug, named TectinTM, will be administered initially to patients at palliative care centres in Toronto, London, Montreal, Calgary and Edmonton.

TectinTM was shown to be safe in a study composed of 127 healthy volunteers and is now ready for Phase II trials to evaluate dosage and clinical efficacy. Vancouver-based International Wex Technologies (Wex) and its associated research laboratories in the People's Republic of China are responsible for developing and manufacturing the drug.

Wex has recognized that there is a pressing clinical need for a safe, effective, inexpensive, and easily administered pharmacologic treatment for cancer pain. It is estimated that 70 to 90 per cent of patients with advanced cancer experience significant pain.

TectinTM is a highly purified form of Tetrodotoxin (TTX), the fabled potent poisonous neurotoxin derived from pufferfish. TTX, like a local anaesthetic, is a sodium channel blocking compound. Sodium channel blockers "put the brakes" on electrochemical nerve transmission and reduce pain signals.

An expensive delicacy

The ancient Chinese were aware that the liver and gonads of the pufferfish contained the majority of the poison and they consumed the rest as a general health tonic. In Japan, the fish, known as fugu, is an expensive delicacy prepared by specially trained and licensed chefs. Fugu is savored for its unique flavor and causes numbness of the lips and tongue when ingested.

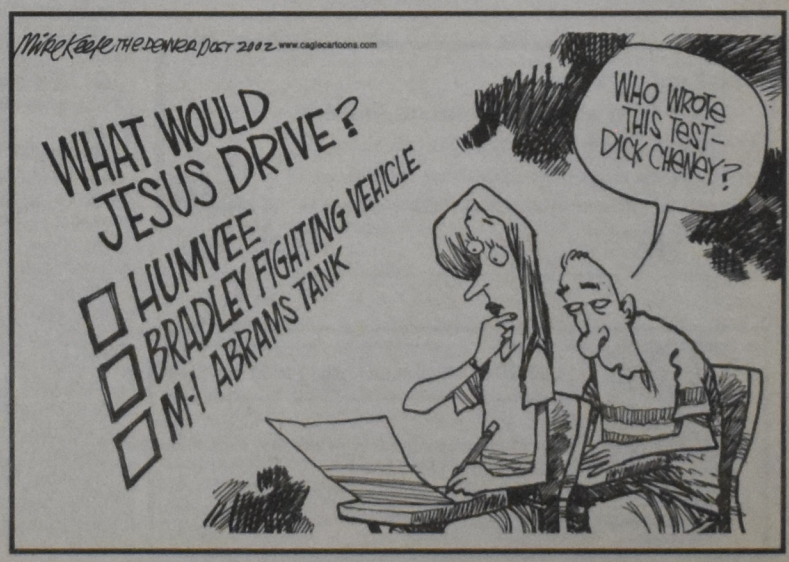
Japanese researchers just prior to WW II experimented with crude pufferfish extract to treat migraines and menstrual cramps. Recently at Beijing Medical University in China, the compound was highly purified and after extensive animal experimentation was given to heroin addicts in large-scale studies to combat the painful symptoms of withdrawal.

Phase II

The success of these studies has led to Phase II studies in North America. In pilot studies in northern China, Tectin TM was administered to patients with pain from advanced gastrointestinal cancers that were resistant to high dose opioids. Patients treated with twice-daily injections had pain relief within five to 30 minutes after the first injection. Despite being treated for only three days, patients reported virtually no pain when evaluated two to three weeks later. The cancer patients reported markedly improved quality of life measures and opioid withdrawal symptoms did not occur at any time.

If new Phase II trials in Canada are able to replicate the impressive findings of recent Chinese studies, TectinTM could be on the way to providing a convenient new addition to pain control.

If you or someone you know is suffering from inadequately treated cancer pain there may be an opportunity to take part in a clinical trial being conducted at an area hospital. 1-800-722-7549.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News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

WAY BACK IN 2001 WHEN Jean Chrétien appointed Roy Romanow to provide a blueprint on Health Care in Canada, I had the audacity to suggest a few tips to the former premier of Saskatchewan, himself, like Chrétien, a life-time politician. I knew that my proposals were less than conventional, having no chance to be adopted by politicians who are always more than conventional.

Power brokers never rock the ship of State, and Roy Romanow is no rocker. Compared to Chrétien's ocean liner, I, in on my piece of driftwood, cannot cause much of an upset, although I seem to rile some people at times. Politicians can, although they seldom do. During Chrétien's marriage to the Liberal party, (now getting more and more rocky) several Billion Dollar Babies were born. Given the party's long reign these little newcomers all should have had silver spoons in their mouths; instead they ended up with dynamite in their diapers: the Sea King Disaster, the Human Resources fiasco, the Gun Registration blow-up, and now, I fear, the healthcare issue.

It seems to me that Governments can only be radical in the wrong and never be radical in the correct way. I like Roy Romanow. I am sure he means well. But he is a politician. Politicians want to be friends with everybody. Impossible.

I, clinging to my little log, will say what no elected person dare say: smoking, obesity, poor diet, excessive drinking, divorce, poor social conditions, unemployment, lack of exercise, account for half of all deaths. I know that to be true. You know it, too. But to say this is impossible for politicians who cannot be radically correct. Only radically wrong. The challenge our governments face is not only to fight diseases – have a sickness-curing-system in place – but especially be a health-promoting-sickness-preventing-agent.

THERE IS WHERE THE no-rocker-Romanow failed the test. Most people have blinders on and can see only one way, the way beamed at us in television, on the radio, in the newspapers, especially at Christmas time, when ads are occasionally interrupted by a story line. We are constantly preached to that money can cure all ills, that money can make us happy. Romanow is no stranger to this. When the politicians nominally heading the 'health' ministries in Canada met, money is what they talked about. They all want a larger slice of the pie, which, due to a faltering economy, will be getting smaller and smaller.

MONEY WILL NOT CURE the 'health' system, only we can, you and I. Only an all-embracing philosophy, a holistic approach, will. In a radically wrong move, the Province of Ontario curtailed the education of nurses some years ago and now the remaining ones are so overworked and exhausted that fewer enter the profession. No wonder they want more money. In a radically wrong move, Home Care was curtailed and now the few remaining home care nurses are so exhausted that they quit for other fields.

One of my granddaughters wanted to become a doctor, but after reading that doctors are more prone to depression than other professions, she changed her mind. Still, more doctors are needed, from wherever. Belgium has a surplus of them: one for every 800 people there, compared to Canada's one for 2,200. So import them from Belgium. We already import one healing agent form there, their chocolate, the best in the world, and a health food as well, still available without a prescription, fortunately, or nobody could afford it.

Of course my recommendations to Romanow were politically radical. Here is what I thought was plain common sense:

(1) One health system, with a deductible rising with income.

(2) Triple tobacco taxes and legalize and tax marijuana at the same rate.

(3) Combine Health and Environment Ministries under one new department: Ministry of Wellness.

(4) Tax all soft drinks and junk foods.

(5) Give grants to all community based programs: soccer, quilting etc.

(6) Mandatory Phys. Ed K-12.

(7) Subsidize anything that promotes energy savings; tax everything that pollutes.

(8) Give tax relief to stay-at-home spouses: male or female.

(9) Give all a minimum national income geared to local cost of living while eliminating welfare.

(10) Let each municipality have its own care facility: tender care close to kin and friends heals faster than any drug therapy.

I am afraid I was a decade ahead of my time. In the interval many will die prematurely due to no-Rocker-Romanow's failure to be radically correct.

IS THERE A CONNECTION between Romanow and Baghdad? In that coming conflict also many people will die prematurely. I found a poster on my e-mail showing a finger-pointing Osama, yelling: "I WANT YOU TO INVADE IRAQ." The text said: "Go ahead. Send me a new generation of recruits. Your bombs will fuel their hatred of America and their desire for revenge. Americans won't be safe anywhere. Please attack Iraq. Distract yourself from fighting Al-Qaeda. Divide the International community. Go ahead. Destabilize the region. Maybe Pakistan will fall – we want its nuclear weapons. Give Saddam a reason to strike first. He might draw Israel into a fight. Perfect! So please – invade Iraq. Make my day."

I am worried. And you should be, too. The U.S.A. is at war with a cruel, militant Islam, led by Al-Qaeda, another word for "radically right religion." The U.S.A. is at war with a rising tide of global anti-Americanism and soon will be at war to disarm Iraq, a war which I really don't know is justified or not. The entire world is already at war with nature. There is no way that we can win such a multidimensional conflict without great sacrifices and without radically correct thinking.

WHAT SACRIFICES? Estimates of the cost of an Iraqi war run as high as $1.5 trillion dollars, including repairing the structural and "collateral" damage caused by these smart bombs, and the expense to feed and govern the 25 million impoverished Iraqi for years to come: all to be paid by American taxpayers, unlike Gulf War I which came courtesy Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Japan. Exactly at a time when Washington politicians want more tax-cuts, the economy seems to lean toward recession, signalling ever larger budget deficits.

I have experienced a war. My most vivid recollections are not the bombs that fell close or the pieces of shrapnel that dropped between my dad and me while watching the spectacular sight of search lights and exploding anti-aircraft shells in the sky. Nor was it the Flying Fortress shot down straight above me and seeing the crew bail out.

My lasting memories are the lack of coal to heat, the months-long black-out with no electricity, trying to work with primitive oil lamps and crude candles. Such scenes are again possible. Arab oil keeps the world and us from freezing in the dark. Thanks to NAFTA, Americans have the first claim on our natural resources.

RADICALLY CORRECT thinking would make wise governments in Ottawa and Washington embark on a no-expense-spared-effort to increase fuel efficiency and slash the cost of alternative energy sources to reduce our dependence on Arab oil. Only this will make us truly independent as a continent and free us from the Arabian stranglehold. I may be wrong – I often am – but to me an invasion into the Middle East looks more and more like a religious war, not unlike the Crusades some 900 years ago when the West – then Christian (Roman Catholic) Europe – set out to free Jerusalem from the Infidels – the followers of the prophet Mohammed, the founder of Islam. This same sort of religious thinking now aims to impose on them our technology, our institutions, our ideas of religious freedom, all notions directly opposed to the premise on which Islam is founded – the belief of God's immutable will, revealed once and for all to his prophet, in the form of an unbreachable and unchanging code of law.

No wonder the Arab world sees an Iraqi incursion as a definite instance of religious domination, with the West taking for granted that the basic assumptions of Islamic society have to be overturned, not only because they don't suit the West but because the West believes that they are unsuitable for Muslims themselves. The West constantly pressures Islamic governments to conform to our concepts of human rights and promote free and critical religious and political thought. In short: only we know the Truth. To be radically right, religiously, whether Christian, Jewish, Islam or Hindu, always leads to radically wrong decisions. The majority of North Americans seem to think that what we have achieved is the ultimate in human happiness, therefore the rest of the world will benefit from the Americanization of the world. We tend to forget that our state of bliss comes thanks to cheap Arab oil, soon either denied to us or exhausted, making me recall my wartime experiences. The orthodox Muslim regards our lifestyle as apostasy, promoting immorality and warranting God's condemnation. Where we see freedom, the non-West world sees destruction of the family, social and moral crises, with many adrift in a destructured and demoralized world.

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ont.

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News

Despite obstacles, church growth continues in Cuba

... continued from page 9

been confiscated by the government on the pretext of a fault in the original paperwork. The government now uses the houses with no compensation to the church members.

Huge personal sacrifice

In spite of the risk, many pastors continue to use their homes as unofficial churches. This often requires huge personal sacrifice. A pastor in rural Bayamo sleeps with his wife and three children in a small double bed, separated from the church hall by a simple wooden door. The church takes up all the former living space. The kitchen and bathroom facilities are now in the yard at the back of the house.

In the past, many Cubans risked their lives by attending house church meetings. Even today, in every housing block there are one or two CDR officials, appointed to record the activities of everyone living in the block. If you apply for a new job in Cuba, these officials must give you a reference. Because of this, many Christians have missed out on higher education or employment. Even so, the house church movement continues to grow.

Growing, dividing quickly

Churches in Santiago, Camaguey and other main centres have divided their cities into different sections, each with an overseer. Overseers supervise the house church leaders, who may have become Christians just a few years prior. House churches are growing so rapidly in some areas that a group may be forced to divide within one or two months. A house church in Havana, for example, began with 10 members and increased to more than 50 in less than two months.

Limited supply of Bibles

Growth brings its own problems. House church leaders often lack training and have a very limited supply of Bibles and study materials. The Assemblies of God is now training some of these leaders through a four-year correspondence course in discipleship. This year, a total of 3,000 students are enrolled from Assemblies of God churches, and another 1,000 students from other denominations. Eighty percent of the students are less than 25 years old.

Supernatural healings common

Baptist churches are also running two or three residential Bible schools in Cuba; however, it is nearly impossible for most house church leaders to attend a full-time training course.

Miracles are another factor in the growth of the house churches. Supernatural healings are commonplace. Yet the pastor of one church explained, "For us, even to have enough food on the table — or milk for our children, or a pair of shoes — is a miracle. Even the smallest prayer answered is a miracle."

A young evangelist echoed this in a passionate sermon at a Friday night youth meeting. Her message was this: "If you don't have to depend on God for your every need, then you don't know what it means to live the Christian life." This is another secret of church growth in Cuba.

People are turning to God because, 43 years into the revolution, there is nowhere else to turn. Shining out from the darkness is a message of hope that attracts an increasing number of people. Thus the "fishermen" of Cuba continue their patient vigil, waiting for the fish to rise toward the light.

Group concerned that Nova Scotia may open up for Sunday shopping

Alan Doerksen

HALIFAX, N.S. – While most provinces in Canada have opened the door to Sunday shopping, Nova Scotia's government has closed the door on the issue until 2005. But the opposition Liberals have voiced support for Sunday shopping, which has raised concerns among groups opposed to that.

Lack of consensus

Last year, Nova Scotia's Justice Minister, Michael Baker, announced that the province will continue to ban shopping on Sundays and designated holidays, and won't even consider the issue again until 2005, reports the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald*. He stressed that his decision came down to a lack of consensus on year-round Sunday shopping in the thousands of submissions that province received from businesses and consumers. "I think it's important on a fundamental issue like that that the legislation try to reflect a consensus in the public."

Baker observed that the province couldn't even find substantial agreement among those supporting Sunday shopping. Opinions differed on whether stores should remain open year-round, or from August to December, or just on Sundays leading up to Christmas.

Baker also turned down a government task force recommendation that municipalities take over responsibility for regulating Sunday shopping, saying that municipalities clearly don't want to take on that role. In November, New Brunswick's Premier Bernard Lord decided that municipalities in that province should make their own decisions about Sunday shopping.

Save Our Sundays sells this T-shirt on its web site.

Petition launched

Although Baker has spoken clearly on this issue, a group called Save Our Sundays (which opposes Sunday shopping) recently accused Premier John Hamm of considering reassessing the concept. "Talk about double standards," asserts the group's web site. "This government has the nerve to discriminate against the retail sector, yet do you hear anything about opening government offices on Sunday? No."

The group is also concerned that the provincial Liberals recently chose a new leader, Danny Graham, who favors open Sunday shopping. Because of this, the group has started a petition encouraging the Liberal Party to oppose Sunday shopping. The "We Want No Part of Sunday Shopping" petition is posted online at: **www.petitiononline.com/sos2002A/petition-sign.html.**

The petition asks: "We, the undersigned, will not support the Liberal Party in the next election unless they change their policies.

1) Say No to Sunday shopping.

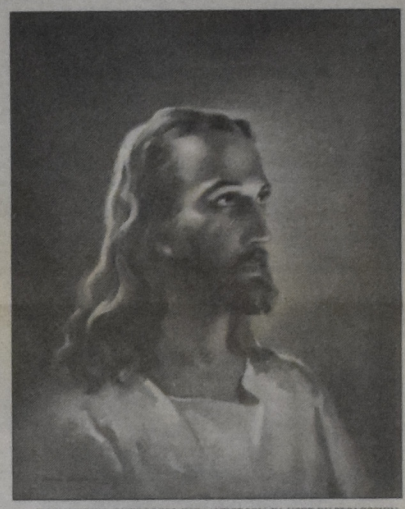
2) Retail workers should not be forced to work Sundays.

3) Part-time hours cannot be cut for refusing to work Sundays."

The group argues that working on Sunday is only acceptable for essential services, which do not include retail stores. James Colbeck, one signer of the petition, noted, "I am signing this petition, not for religious purposes, but because Sunday is a special day. It's quiet and different – and I would like it to stay that way. People do not have additional money to spend on Sunday in the stores, so how do the large companies expect to make additional money? They will simply have to pay more wages. It is also unfair to expect store workers to work on this day that they might wish to spend with their families."

Painter Warner Sallman's name little-known, but his work is universal

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – His most famous piece is the 1940 painting "Head of Christ." It's an oil-on-canvas work that depicts Christ in profile. In it Jesus gazes into the distance, his blue eyes cast slightly upward and his lips pursed. He has long, sandy hair which flows down his neck and shoulders.



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'Head of Christ' *by Warner Sallman.*

Up to one billion copies

It's an image that came to represent Jesus for many Christians in the 1940s and beyond. In fact current estimates are that "Head of Christ" has been reproduced anywhere from 500 million to one billion times in the last 60 years on everything from clocks to calendars to cards (during World War II it was distributed in wallet size by the Salvation Army and YMCA to millions of U.S. military men and women).

For Calvin art professor Henry Luttikhuizen and Calvin history professor Peggy Bendroth such visual depictions of religion are fascinating.

They're especially interested in how people of Protestant belief often used religious images in their homes, despite the absence of such images in their churches.

And so in January 2003 they will co-curate a show at the Center Art Gallery at Calvin that will feature 19th- and 20th-century popular religious images. The exhibition, to be called "The House of God: Religious Observation within American Protestant Homes," is made possible by a Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship grant. It will open January 7 and conclude February 13, 2003.

One of the pieces, among the 35-45 slated for the show, will be the original oil-on-canvas "Head of Christ" by Sallman (on loan from Anderson University).

"I think," says Luttikhuizen, "that it will be very interesting for people to see the painting that for so many came to be Christ. It was never intended by Sallman to be fine art. His intent was actually to use his art as an evangelism tool. He was a graduate of Moody Bible Institute and he very much saw himself as a evangelist."

Luttikhuizen says the upcoming show will allow people to see a variety of images that Protestants and evangelicals displayed in great numbers in the early decades of the 20th century, despite the visual austerity of their churches.

"As a result of the Reformation," says Luttikhuizen, "many Protestants, and certainly most Reformed faiths, had sanctuaries devoid of images. But their homes are filled with them. It's a very interesting contrast."

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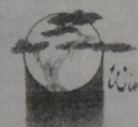

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Classifieds

As of May 1999:
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DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, thirteen days prior to publication date.

RATES

All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (P.I.) + GST (columns are two inches wide). Display advertising re.: businesses and organizations: minimum $18.20 P.I. + GST, depending on design and frequency.

PHOTOS

There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original (which we will return) or a downloadable Internet image.

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Christian Courier would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is $35. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at $16 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.

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fax: 905-682-8313
Email: accounts@christiancourier.ca

OTHER INFORMATION

a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style.
b) Please provide us with clear copy. *Christian Courier* is not responsible for any errors due to hand written or phoned-in advertisements.

Anniversary

1943 January 14 2003
Dehier Brampton

Great is thy Faithfulness

With joy and thanksgiving, we hope to celebrate the 60 th wedding anniversary of our parents:

WILLEM and PAULA VANDERMEER
(nee Mast)

On Jan 18, 2003 an open house will be held from 2:00 till 4:00 at Holland Christian Homes (Harmony Hall).
Thankful children and grandchildren:
Nick & Antoinette VanderMeer
Whitby
Elena, Corrinna, Angie
Ary & Martha VanderMeer - *Stayner*
Willem & Amanda, Glen, John, Matthew, Andy
Evelyn & Pim Boekestyn
Niagara-on-the-Lake
Pauline, Nicole, Mandy, Peter
Home address: Hope Tower Apt 713, 7900 McLaughlin Rd.
Brampton ON L6V 5A7

Birthday

It is with great joy and thanksgiving to God that we could celebrate the 90th birthday of mom last October and now dad's 90th on January 1st. Our parents,

Repko and Geziena Popma

are blessed with good health and share many joys with friends, great-grand children, grandchildren and their children:
Alice and Gary Brand,
Margriet & John Nieboer
Harold & Kathy Popma
Jackie & Peter Vanhuizen
Violet Popma
Carolien & Cam Murch
We praise God for his faithfulness.
Correspondence address: R.R.#1
Plainfield, Ontario K0K 2V0

Anniversaries

1942 December 3 2002
Andijk, NL Edmonton, AB

GEORGE and GRACE ZEE

With grateful hearts to our Heavenly Father we could celebrate our 60th Anniversary with our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren; brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours. As we have entrusted our lives to God in the past, so we will continue in whatever future He provides.
Home address: #138 13425 - 57St.
Edmonton, AB T5A 2G1

3 December, 2002

With deep thanksgiving to our Lord for the grace and mercy He has provided you, our parents,

GEORGE and GRACE ZEE
(nee Gorter)

during your 60 years of married life, we extend our appreciation, love and congratulations. We pray that you may continue for many years to be a blessing to each of our families.
Ebeline & John Hawtin - *Edmonton AB*
Cor & Doreen Zee - *Edmonton, AB*
Frank & Marlys Zee - *St. Albert, AB*
Alfred & Rhonda Zee - *Banff, AB*
Tena & Abe Horneman-
Rollyview AB
Rosa Zee - *Edmonton, AB*
Annette & Will Greenwood
Medicine Hat, AB
John & Cheryl Zee -*St. Albert, AB*

Obituary

May 6, 1918 December 4, 2002
Noord Bergum Brampton
Friesland Ontario

JACOB VANDER MEER

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." John 14:2,3

On December 4, 2002, our husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather (Pake), was taken up in glory - taken Home where he so longed to be the last while as he struggled with his health. Although we love him, and will miss him dearly here in this life, we can only be thankful and happy for him now, as he is no longer suffering. He leaves behind Hilly, his wife of 56 years, and his children and their families:
(all from Ontario)
Klaas & Ruth Vandermeer -*Cambridge*
Siebe & Mary Vandermeer
Orangeville
Jay, Wes (& friend Katherine)
Rosanne (& little Jackson)
Dorothy & Harry VanSpronsen -*Acton*
Sye & Elly Vandermeer - *Georgetown*
Christine (& son Cody),
Jack & Anita, Jeffery
Janet & Mike Hunnersen - *Cambridge*
Melissa (& friend Tim), Nicole, Bryce
Harry & Sandy Vandermeer - *McKellar*
Craig, Mark, Steven, Heather
As well as other extended family.
A memorial service was held in the Christian Reformed Church of Georgetown, on Saturday, December 6, 2002, with Pastors Herman Praamsma and Mark Verbruggen officiating.
Correspondence address:
Mrs. Hilly VanderMeer
7900 McLaughlin Rd. S. HT. #605
Brampton, ON L6Y 5A7

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Job Opportunities

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London, Ontario is an interdenominational Christian School (JK-8) with a student body of approximately 90 students and a dynamic staff. We are currently seeking applications for the position of **Principal** for the school year starting September 2003.
Qualified applicants should include their statement of faith, curriculum vitae, educational philosophy, transcripts and names of three references. Please submit applications to:

Faith Community Chr. Sch.
Attn: Tracy Jollymore
7 Howard Ave.
London, ON N6P 1B3
Or email us at: info@fccs.on.ca
Visit our website at: **www.fccs.on.ca**

JOHN KNOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Brampton, Ontario, invites applications for a **principal**, beginning **August 1, 2003**. The school has approximately 315 students from JK to grade 8. We are looking for someone with a solid reformed perspective and the ability to relate to Christians from a variety of denominational backgrounds. Check our web site for more information about our school. Please direct application and/or questions to:

Ms. Deb Douma, chairperson
Administrative Search Committee
82 Mclaughlin Road St.
Brampton, ON L6Y 2C7
Tel: 905-874-9713
Fax: 905-451-7604
E-mail: jddouma@rogers.com

ROCKY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

requires a **Principal** for September 2003, to direct, implement, and coordinate the educational program in close cooperation with Board, Education Committee, and staff.
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Robert Boodt, Chairman
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From all of us:
Wishing you a happy New Year

Classifieds

Job Opportunities

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Part time or temporary position for Faith Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in **Fairview, Alberta**. For more information and church profile, call: David Bosma at (780)835-2236, fax: (780)835-5225, write: Faith Fellowship CRC Box 871, Fairview, Alberta T0H 1L0 or email: vanderja@telusplanet.net

Personal

I am a 29 year old Christian female seeking a 29-34 year-old Christian male who has strong Christian values. Reply to: **Box 2735, 1 Hiscott St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7**

Single, early 30's female looking for a male pen pal. I love sports & work with children. Hope to correspond with someone who is sincere in his walk with God. Reply to: **Box 2736, 1 Hiscott St. St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7**

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CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA

The Christian Reformed Church in North America, due to the scheduled retirement of Mr. Kenneth J. Horjus, is seeking potential candidates for the position of Director of Finance and Administrative Support Services. The function is equivalent to a Chief Financial Officer position with overall responsibility for the financial management of the denomination and several of its administrative support departments. The position reports to the executive director of ministries. Anticipated starting date is June 1, 2003.

A position description is available upon request. Further information can be obtained by contacting one of the persons listed below. If you are suggesting a possible candidate or desire to be considered, please mail your letter or resume to Mr. Waanders.

Dr. Peter Borgdorff
Executive Director of Ministries
2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49560
800.272-5125 or 616.224.0832
borgdorp@crcna.org

Mr. William L. Waanders
ExecuQuest
2050 Breton Rd SE Ste 103
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
877.949.1800 or 616.949.1800
ExecuQuest@aol.com

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Programs in Christian Vocation, Project Director
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Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

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V. P. for Academic Affairs
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Fax: 712 722-4496
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu
Web site: www.dordt.edu/offices/acadaff

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

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Job Opportunities

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For a complete job description, or to send your resumes, please contact Dan Wyngaarden **613-389-8177 (fax) 613-389-7789** or Email us at **clerk@1stcrckingston.on.ca**

Join the excitement in Simcoe County!
In anticipation of our September 2004 opening, the Simcoe County Christian High School Association (member O.A.C.S.) is seeking a

PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

to partner with the Board of Directors and its standing committees in laying the foundation for our school.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, the Principal/Administrator will outline policy, develop programs, liase with feeder schools, strengthen visibility in the community, solicit financial support, promote enrolment, and enlist staff.

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Please direct inquiries and/or an application package including a recent statement of Educational Philosophy to:

S.C.C.H.S
c/o 41 Peacock Lane
Barrie, ON L4N 3R7

Ph: 705-727-9242 application deadline: Jan. 25, 2003.

Calendar of Events

Items Appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

Jan 17	**Concert of Sacred Music** by St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir - 7:30 p.m. at First CRC, 181 Charlton Ave, **Hamilton**. Sponsored by World Wide Christian Schools. Freewill offering. (905) 765-5623
Jan 18	**Concert of Sacred Music** by St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir - 7:30 p.m. at Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church, 130 Scugog St., **Bowmanville**. Freewill offering (519) 637-4357.
May 3	CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL,547 West Fifth Street, **Hamilton**, Ontario Celebrating 50th anniversary. Open House at the school from 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Dinner at Michelangelo's Banquet Ctr. Social at 5:30 p.m., Dinner at 6:30 p.m.$40.00 per person. To order tickets please send names & cheque payable to Calvin Christian School to Ena Mostert,22 Ambassador Drive, Hamilton, ON L9C 2N8

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Share the Joy

Date: Friday, January 17, 2003
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Place: First Christian Reformed Church
181 Charlton Ave. West, Hamilton

Free Will Offering
For Information: **905-765-5623**

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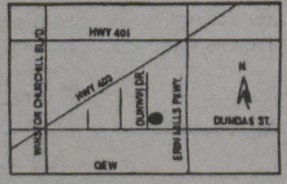
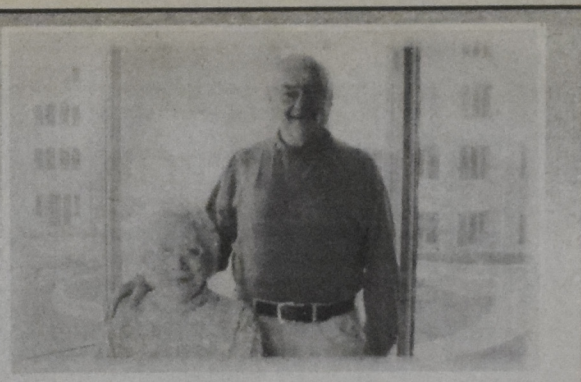


Mississauga, Dundas St. — 2 Blocks W. of Erin Mills Parkway (905) 828-9511



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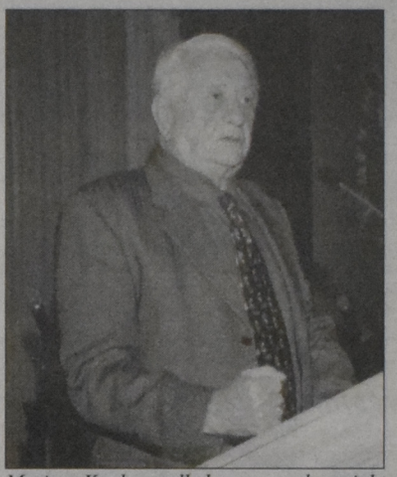
News

Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools: 1952–2002

PHOTOS COURTESY ONTARIO ALLIANCE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Adrian Guldemond, Executive Director of the OACS, speaks at the 50th anniversary.



Marinus Koole recalled numerous late night OACS meetings in the '50s and '60s.

Harry der Nederlanden

OAKVILLE, Ont. — On November 9, 2002 the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools celebrated its 50th anniversary with a big shindig at the Oakville Conference Centre. (We took note of the Christian Labour Association's 50th anniversary recently, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario will also celebrate its 50th in a couple of years, so Reformed organizations in Canada are reaching a milestone.)

Reminiscences from pioneers

The occasion drew a crowd of nearly 600 people and a long list of speakers; besides the obligatory official and greeting from sister organizations, we heard reminiscences from "pioneers" and former officers, and were challenged by some who were designated "visionaries" to fit into the theme of the celebration: "Pioneers and visionaries."

In between the guests were entertained by a choir from John Knox Christian School in Oakville and by an outstanding flute and guitar duo – Carolyn Zeyl and Brian MacDonald. The latter were almost drowned out at times by thumping rock-and-roll music from a wedding in the room next door, a symbol perhaps that Christian education has always had to strive against competition to make itself heard.

Various past officers of the OACS shared memories and bits of history: Marinus Koole and Sid Harkema recalled numerous late night meetings in the '50s and '60s; Kathryn Postumus, the first woman to serve on the OACS board, and Jane Brower, the first woman to act as chair, shared episodes from the '70s and '80s. Jack Fennema, now Professor of Education at Covenant College in Tennessee, gave an appreciative and entertaining account of how a Yankee learned to work with a pushy bunch of neo-Kuyperians.

An interesting chapter of history

Bert Witvoet, who served for a short time as the editor of *The Christian School Herald*, was left to carry most of the weight for the visionary segment of the program. No good anniversary celebration of a Reformed organization is complete without a reminder that everything that was achieved was the work of sinful people who also make mistakes and leave behind hurt. At one time, we learned, Christian teachers in Canada had a flourishing publication of their own – *The Christian School Herald*. However, the National Union of Christian Schools (NUCS), it seems, felt threatened by its existence and managed to gain control of it, and shortly thereafter it closed the publication down. It's an interesting chapter in the history of Christian education in Canada that speaks volumes. In creating the identity of a Christian organization, we often end up struggling with our friends (for NUCS was certainly that) as well as with those we readily identify as the opposition.

Because of the long list of speakers, the program became something of an endurance test. People were beginning to trickle out before Adrian Guldemond, the Executive Director of the OACS, whom we expected to give something of a keynote address, could get to the podium. He wisely elected to publish his speech on the OACS website instead (and also sent CC a copy).

Ontario cabinet minister Tim Hudak (l.) and John Van Loenen (r.) appeared at the OACS celebration.

In his projected speech,"Four Les- sons for the Future," Guldemond drew wisdom from the past to guide the OACS into the future.

He pointed out how unique the idea of running Christian schools by means of societies comprised of parents and supporters is in North America. Most Christian schools are owned, operated and controlled by individual churches or denominations. Having society-operated schools ensures a great deal of parental involvement, said Guldemond, a primary ingredient in successful education.

Part of a larger vision

Moreover, the schools were established as part of a larger vision regarding our Christian responsibility toward our culture and society. Behind them was the conviction that "Christian organizations are necessary for internal encouragement and external witness in all areas of our culture." Therefore, the Christian school is seen as just one of many spheres in which Christians must be busy asserting the claims of the kingdom, and it is not first of all a function of the church or the state but has a task of its own, closely related to the family.

"What was the pioneers' secret to success?" asked Guldemond. "Ora et Labora" [pray and work], he answered, a phrase we also heard at the CLAC anniversary. Although Christian schools will have to change with the times, said Guldemond, two things will not change: our need for God's providence and care, and our need to prayerfully seek out God's will.

"The kingdom comes through God's blessings – it is not something we can construct ourselves. It is a serendipitous by-product of running the race with grace."

Guldemond appropriately phrased his last point, our continuing struggle for educational justice and equality, as a prayer to God to keep us true to the supreme model – his Son.

Christian Courier congratulates the OACS for 50 years of principled commitment to our children and thereby to the future of our society. May God give you another 50 years of such biblically-directed leadership in the power of the Spirit.

News Digest

Pregnant woman regains sight

OSLO, Norway (*Aftenposten*) – A Norwegian woman has regained her sight during her pregnancy.

Before she became pregnant, Mona Ramdal only had 15 per cent vision. But during the course of the pregnancy her sight improved so dramatically she passed her driving test at the first attempt.

Aftenposten eye doctor Per Hvamstad, who has treated 29-year-old Ramdal since the late 1970s, says he has never heard of a similar case.

"It is really quite unbelievable. It is a miracle. I cannot explain what has happened," Hvamstad told the Norwegian newspaper *VG*.

Ramdal was born with an infection which can cause eye or brain damage in children. Her right eye has always had severely limited vision. When she turned 13 her left eye also began to fail, and gradually her vision was reduced to 15 per cent in that eye. But when Ramdal became pregnant the sight in her left eye began to return.

By the time her daughter was born, Ms Ramdal could see normally.

Law bites Royals

LONDON, England – Princess Anne has become the first member of the British Royal Family with a criminal record in more than 350 years.

After pleading guilty in November to being in charge of a dog which caused injury in a public place, the princess was ordered to pay a fine of £500 (about $1,200) and £250 in compensation to the two boys whom her bull terrier, Dotty, attacked in a park.

A district judge in Berkshire convicted Anne under the Dangerous Dogs Act, and ordered her to keep her pet on a leash in public.

The case is the first in which a senior member of the Royal Family has been convicted of a crime.

Outatha Way!

MOCKSVILLE, North Carolina (AP) – Look at the street signs and you might think people in Davie County don't like visitors. There's Staya Way and Getta Way, Keepa Way and Outatha Way. But the people who live on the streets say they're friendly.

"When we named the road, we didn't even think it was odd," said Keretha Shore, who lives on Staya Way. "We just thought it was funny."

The Shores' former neighbor, David Plott, suggested the name when the county mandated several years ago that all roads have names so that emergency vehicles could find them. Other neighbors liked it, too. All four roads are private, so property owners along the roads had naming rights.